Shaken creeds: the resurrection doctrines,
232.5 R349s
122557
Rhys, Jocelyn.
Life Pacific College Alumni Library

DATE DUE

JAN 27 1986	NOV 19 1998		
OCT 5 1987	DEC 06 1999		
NOV 2 1988	NOV 13 2000		
DEC 04 1989			
OCT 15 1990			
NOV 5 1991			
OCT 14 1991			
OCT 21 1991			
NOV 11 1991			
DEC 09 1991			
DEC 7 1992			
DEC 06 1993			
DEC 05 1997			

Shaken creeds:
232.5 R349s 122557

Rhys, Jocelyn.
LIFE Alumni Library

232.5
R349s

Rhys, Jocelyn
Shaken creeds

FE Pacific College
Alumni Library
00 West Covina Blvd
n Dimas

DEMCO

SHAKEN CREEDS:

THE RESURRECTION DOCTRINES

"Nor is it always those who have most completely abandoned dogmatic systems who are the least sensible to the moral beauty which has grown around them. The music of the village church, which sounds so harsh and commonplace to the worshippers within, sometimes fills with tears the eyes of the stranger who sits without, listening among the tombs. It is difficult to say how far the partial truce which has now fallen in England over the great antagonisms of belief is likely to be permanent. No one who knows the world can be insensible to the fact that a large and growing proportion of those who habitually attend our religious services have come to diverge very widely, though in many different degrees, from the beliefs which are expressed or implied in the formularies they use. Custom, fashion, the charm of old associations, the cravings of their own moral and spiritual nature, a desire to support a useful system of moral training, to set a good example to their children, their household, or their neighbours, keep them in their old place when the beliefs which they profess with their lips have in a great measure ebbed away. I do not undertake to blame or to judge them. Individual conscience and character and particular circumstances have, in these matters, a decisive voice. But there are times when the difference between the professed belief and the real belief is too great for endurance, and when insincerity and half-belief seriously affect the moral character of a nation."

—LECKY, "Map of Life," pp. 228-9.

SHAKEN CREEDS:

THE RESURRECTION DOCTRINES

BY

JOCELYN RHYS

Author of "Shaken Creeds: The Virgin Birth Doctrine"

LONDON:

WATTS & CO.,

JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.4

1924

Printed in Great Britain
by Watts & Co., Johnson's Court,
Fleet Street, London, E.C.4

R349s
L.I.F.E. College Library
1100 Glendale Blvd.
Los Angeles, Calif. 90026

INTRODUCTION

In a previous volume, "Shaken Creeds: The Virgin Birth Doctrine," I gave a brief account of what is known concerning the origin of the New Testament books—the "scriptures" upon which the doctrines of Christianity are said to be based; and I examined at some length the story that Jesus was born of a virgin. In the present volume I examine the doctrines that Jesus descended into Hell, rose again from the dead on the third day and ascended into Heaven, and that the bodies of all men will one day rise from their graves.

None of the critics who reviewed the former book have attempted to deny the facts I brought forward, or to refute the arguments I used; but some of them have taken me to task for implying that many prominent theologians are dishonest. Yet how can that implication be avoided when the whole object of one's work is, as I pointed out in the Introduction to that book, to draw attention to the deplorable consequences of men in public positions affirming their belief in doctrines which they do not really believe in their original sense? That eminent clerics habitually use expressions to which they assign meanings other than their literal meanings, they themselves confess; and even if some theologians believe that this practice is justifiable, no layman can regard it as honest. I, in common with all other students of theological controversies, know that many of the clergy use certain expressions symbolically, and that they have

convinced themselves that they are honestly entitled to do so; but my contention is that these otherwise honourable men have deceived themselves if they have become convinced that it is honest to affirm as facts things which they believe only as metaphors. Some of them accept the Christian creed as a "form" that is provided by tradition, but which they have the right to interpret as they wish.[1] These re-interpretations of ancient phrases are, however, we always find, simply devices for depriving them of all meaning. "So," as a recent advocate of "the Gospel of Reality" writes, "we come to make our highest aim the retention of our labels, when the boxes on which they are pasted have been long since emptied of their contents."[2]

Others still accept a few of the articles of the Creeds as statements of fact, but repeat many of them, such as the clauses about the Descent into Hell and the Ascension, only as allegories, metaphors, symbols, or analogies.

The Bishop of Ontario, in an article entitled "Fair Play in Controversy,"[3] takes exception to some comments I made[4] upon an article he had previously contributed to "The Hibbert Journal." I am extremely sorry to have hurt his feelings, and if I have in any way misrepresented

[1] See "Mysticism and the Creed," chap. i, by W. F. Cobb, D.D., Rector of St. Ethelburga's, in the City of London. Dr. Cobb accuses the Catholics of regarding the Creed as a mere symbol of orthodoxy, and the "Puritanical bodies" of regarding it as a mere denominational formula. The distinction which he draws between forms, symbols, and denominational formulæ is not clear, but apparently they all have this in common —that they are not phrases believed in as statements of fact. Dr. Cobb says that he lives his life as his conscience teaches him, and makes it fit into this form which the Church provides.

[2] Esmé Wingfield-Stratford, "Facing Reality," p. 277.

[3] Pp. 243-52 in the May (1923) number of "Theology."

[4] In "Shaken Creeds: The Virgin Birth Doctrine," pp. 219-21.

him I apologize. But when some one writes, as he did, of "the Ascension into Heaven and the Session at the right hand of God" as only "symbolic representations of the truth they are intended to convey," and when he also defends the retention of "the miraculous element" in the Gospels on the grounds that it confirms the plain man's "conception of Christ as being God as well as man," and that "the plain man"—by which expression he refers to the ordinary churchgoer unversed in theological subtleties—"feels that if this element were eliminated the Central Figure would not only be much less vivid, but also much less convincing," it seems justifiable to draw the inference that he does not himself believe in the Christian story as true history. The Bishop's whole argument was directed to the point of how "the plain man" would be affected by any alteration in the creeds. It seemed that he was not prepared to defend the historic truth of the creedal clauses, but was anxious only to draw attention to what would, in his opinion, be the undesirable results of re-interpreting or re-stating them. For, if the doctrines are defensible in their ancient and literal meaning, surely the question of policy does not arise, and an argument to demonstrate their truth would be preferred before an argument to demonstrate their utility. The question whether the miracles actually took place would be discussed rather than the question whether a belief that they did so confirms men's conception of Christ. In drawing this inference I was, it appears, mistaken, as Dr. Bidwell does ex animo believe in the Creeds as statements of historic events, and he was only for the nonce envisaging the matter from the point of view of those clergymen who do not do so. That he is, as he claims, entitled to discuss the matter from that

point of view, no one can deny; but those who disagree with him are certainly entitled to point out that a cause which is defended by such arguments, and upon those grounds, must appear in the eyes of its defenders a very weak one. How can he and those who think like him, if they know of any better arguments, base their appeals upon the ground of ecclesiastical expediency? It is not upon that ground that men have ever based a real religious faith, though it may be upon such grounds that Churches have frequently selected and defended their doctrines.

I have no animus, as he implies I have, "against bishops and all who believe that the Catholic Creeds remain unshaken by the attacks made on them," or against any other persons whose opinions differ from my own. For those whom I criticize are not those who believe, but those who do not believe yet solemnly affirm their belief every Sunday. And, while criticizing, I repeatedly express my sympathy with those who do not confess their real beliefs because they fear the more ignorant section of their congregations. But, in the present circumstances, it is impossible to discuss religious doctrines without drawing attention to the fact that many clergymen are, in Dr. Foakes Jackson's words, which the Bishop himself quotes, "really preaching a new religion, and concealing the fact from themselves by disguising it in the phraseology of the old." If men are inconsistent, they have no right, when their inconsistencies are pointed out, to complain that this is equivalent to a charge of dishonesty and therefore a flagrant violation of the ordinary rules of controversy. "Again and again the Church has attempted to defend indefensible positions.....Even to-day many of the clergy who under-

stand the position well enough are unwilling to express in the pulpit the views they hold in private from fear of offending earnest and worthy but narrow-minded and ignorant sections of their congregations." Those are the words of Somervell, the author of an orthodox "Short History of Our Religion," and they state a fact which is acknowledged by every student of ecclesiastical history, however faithful and however devout. So long as people say one thing when they mean another they lay themselves open to a charge of disingenuousness; and, though one is loth to criticize individuals who are in a position of great difficulty, it is legitimate, and I think desirable, to draw their attention to the fact that in secular circles it is usually considered the best policy, as well as the right thing, to say exactly and in the plainest language what one really does believe, and, if one speaks in public, to profess in public the views one confesses in private. In ecclesiastical circles at the present moment, as every one who studies theological controversies well knows, that policy is recommended only by a small minority of men who are called "Modernists" or "Liberal Churchmen." It is opposed by the majority of clergymen and by episcopal authority because they fear its effects upon their organization.

The late Bishop of Chelmsford, referring to the scepticism of the Modernists, says, in his Foreword to "The Christ of the Future," that "the important question, which is scarcely ever faced by the 'liberal' controversialist, is not whether his so-called conclusions gratify or even satisfy a few 'intellectuals,' but whether they lead to the salvation of souls, as the Apostle understood salvation....." In other words, "the important question," in the eyes of this Bishop, was not whether the conclusions

were true—for conclusions that satisfy the learned who have studied a subject are probably true—but whether they conduced to a belief in the Bishop's recipe for "the salvation of souls." For the expression, "the salvation of souls, as the Apostle understood salvation," can refer only to the ecclesiastical recipe for a spiritual life? Is there no other recipe? Is not truth the best recipe for every spiritual complaint? Surely the question is a question of what is true, and not a question of whether men will continue to apply to the Bishop for a prescription which cannot be defended on its merits! The Bishop, like many other ecclesiastics, seems to have been anxious to raise what is really a false issue, instead of intent to discuss the case on its merits and on the facts. Probably, like the Bishop of Ontario, who argued about the effect of the Modernist's proposals upon "the plain man," the Bishop of Chelmsford affirmed his belief in the truth, symbolical or actual, of the creeds. Then why not give reasons for his belief instead of giving reasons why others should conceal theirs? Is pandering to ignorance more conducive to salvation of souls than the enlightenment of the unlearned? Is the truth of less importance than the claim to hold the keys of Heaven, or to possess the magic words which open its gates? To a layman, such arguments sound like an appeal to keep the truth secret. The ecclesiastical dignitaries, and there are many of them, who write in this strain seem to have but one object in view—the maintenance of the ecclesiastical organization. They are doubtless most honourable men, but when every object is made subsidiary to the survival of an organization, unreformed and unregenerate, the recognition of facts is apt to be carefully avoided. The Bishop of Ontario, who apparently overlooked the fact

that I did not accuse him of personal dishonesty, but only stated my opinion that "the plain man," with whom he was so greatly concerned, would regard it as dishonest to state that he believed that "He ascended into Heaven" when he believed something else apparently indefinable, has now given what he calls a definition of the meaning of those words.[1] He must know that in the days when the New Testament was written, and in the days when the Creeds were first formulated, all men believed that Heaven was a place situated above the clouds; and that the creedal clause, "He ascended into Heaven," was founded upon the words—"He was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight, and while they looked steadily towards Heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven." Yet the Bishop informs us that the word "ascended" does not mean "ascended," and that

[1] Lest I be accused of misrepresenting the Bishop, I quote his own definition of the Ascension, which he believes "to be the truth, described by those who saw the event exactly as it took place before their eyes. The idea that Heaven is a place has changed into the belief that it is rather a state of existence. But even so, the words of the Creed represent quite adequately the fact set forth—namely, that the Risen and Living Christ passed, in the presence of those witnesses, from the earthly sphere of existence which He had temporarily occupied to the heavenly sphere of existence whence He came at His Incarnation. That is clearly what the disciples who saw the event meant by their description of it; that is what the Creed means, and that is what I and the 'plain man' mean when we recite that clause of the Creed. Our belief is by no means in 'something indefinable,' but in a very definite fact not in the slightest degree impaired by realization of the necessary human limitations of those who naturally used the word 'ascend' in describing what they saw, or by the changed meaning of the idea connoted by the word 'heaven.' That is what I mean by 'symbolical representation'....."

the word "Heaven" does not mean a place. He further states that "the Creed means," and "the disciples who saw the event" and "who described it exactly as it took place before their eyes" meant, that Jesus "passed, in the presence of those witnesses, from the earthly sphere of existence to a heavenly sphere of existence," Heaven itself being merely a state of existence. And he affirms that "the plain man" also means this when he recites the words, "He ascended into Heaven." Of "the plain man" in Canada the Bishop has more right to speak than I have, but I venture to assert that "the plain man" in England means nothing of the kind, and, not being a student of esoteric theosophies, would regard the expression "passed.....from the earthly sphere of existence to a heavenly sphere of existence" as merely a rhetorical manner of saying "He died." To whom, too, does the Bishop refer when he speaks of those who "described .....the event exactly as it took place before their eyes"? The traditional describer of this event is not said to have been himself present, neither does the author of the two Biblical accounts claim to have witnessed the event. Has Dr. Bidwell some private source of information not yet published to the world, or is the phrase, like the doctrine, merely symbolical?

In the present book I discuss the original story of the Ascension and the numerous curious re-interpretations of its original meaning by which modern theologians attempt to justify their use of the ancient formula which states a fact that they no longer believe. But, without at present going into any further details, I am entitled to ask whether the Bishop is justified in complaining if one criticizes those who affirm their belief in the words, "He ascended into Heaven," and then explain that this is what

they really think about the subject. Are laymen not entitled to criticize men who set up as teachers of ethics and yet have such peculiar ideas about the accuracy of the words they use? The Bishop of Ontario, to whom I am referring at such great length because he complains of my criticism, is only one of many who entirely alter the meaning of the words they use, and who feel injured if they are blamed for so doing. Do these men claim that, because they speak in the name of religion, attention must not be called to the fact of their altering the meaning of words, and of their pretending that the original tellers of a story meant something entirely different from what they actually wrote, and entirely different, not only from what they were for hundreds of years supposed to have meant, but also from what has always been depicted in sacred art, described by devout poets, and taught by priests and parsons of the religion these men themselves belong to; and something, moreover, which could never have entered the heads of the original authors, even if it has any real definite meaning for modern theosophists or mystics? Do they claim that ministers of their own particular religion are exempt from the criticisms which they themselves apply to ministers of other religions and of other sects of their own religion? Are they exempt, by virtue of their holy office, from the canons of logic and from the remonstrances usually made if men say one thing when they admittedly mean something else, the admission being only made under pressure and not, like the original statement, solemnly and in public? Have they any moral right to complain when it is pointed out that pious phrases, though they may lead some devout souls off the track of the truth, do not justify the use of misleading affirmations? It is these

questions they have to answer before they whine about charges of dishonesty when specific examples of inaccurate statements are quoted. They frequently lament what they themselves call "the failure of Christianity." Why has it failed? Surely because its ministers have generally been concerned in defending impossible positions, and in pretending that nothing has been altered since Christianity was first established by Constantine, that new knowledge has made no difference to old speculations, and that things which are not true may still be affirmed as if they were true.

As regards the doctrines dealt with in the following pages, there can be no doubt that a large number of persons who at frequent intervals solemnly affirm their belief in them do not really believe them in their original and literal sense. Very few, if any, even of the beneficed clergy, believe all of them without mental reservations or giving entirely new meanings to the old words; or, still more commonly, depriving the old words of all meaning whatever.

Is it surprising that orthodoxy is becoming, in the words of Erasmus, "synonymous with ignorance"? Its most ardent supporters are those who have never taken the trouble to study the doctrines they so strenuously uphold. Religion was once the expression of the best knowledge acquired by man. That knowledge was certainly, as our knowledge is probably, imperfect, incomplete, and in many ways erroneous; but it was at all events the best knowledge available. Deliberately to foster beliefs which are known to be false must inevitably lead to the downfall of any institution which attempts it. The only doubt there can be about that downfall is whether it will come about soon or later. That it must

eventually befall such an institution is undoubted. Those who retain a sentimental attachment to that ancient institution, those who still believe that it might help to bring together men whom interests apparently conflicting tend to separate, and those who believe that it could aid in the dissemination of a healthy ethic, must, if they wish to save it, unite in insisting that it teaches only the truth. If that is an impossible thing for it to do, then it is doomed, and deservedly doomed.

I must once more gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Thomas Whittaker, who has very kindly read my MS. and made several valuable suggestions; and also my obligation to Mr. F. W. Read, who has read the proofs and helped me considerably, more particularly in regard to the Egyptological references.

J. R.

March, 1924.

CONTENTS

Part I

THE RESURRECTION STORY

PAGE

Chap. I.—The Evidence from the New Testament - - - - - - - - 3

Synopsis: The accounts of the Resurrection. Mark's account of the discovery that the tomb was empty. Matthew's account of the empty tomb. Luke's account of the empty tomb. John's account of the empty tomb. "Apocryphal" accounts of the empty tomb. The accounts of the appearances of the risen Jesus. Matthew's account of the appearances. Luke's account of the appearances. John's account of the appearances. The pseudo-Mark account of the appearances. Luke's reference, in the Acts of the Apostles, to his previous account of the appearances. The appearance to Paul. Paul's list of appearances, and his resurrection doctrine. Paul's catalogue of appearances compared with those of the evangelists. The oldest tradition.

Chap. II.—Other Stories of Resurrections - 48

Synopsis: Frequency of resurrection stories in ancient and medieval times. Old Testament stories. New Testament stories. The resurrection of other man-gods. Other ancient myths. Magic formulæ for raising the dead. Commonness of resurrections in the primitive Church. Spiritual regeneration. Resurrections performed by medieval saints. Saints who

PAGE

lived after their heads had been cut off. Indian, Mexican, and other resurrection stories from "heathen" lands. The growth of legends.

CHAP. III.—THE DESCENT INTO HELL - - - 95

Synopsis: Lateness of the doctrine. Uncanonical sources. Pagan parallels. Allegorical nature of original myth.

CHAP. IV.—THE ASCENSION - - - - - 102

Synopsis: Story told only by Luke. Unaccountable silence of other evangelists. Brevity of and contradictions in Luke's two accounts. Apocryphal accounts of the post-Resurrection life of Jesus. Ascensions conceivable only by those who regard the universe as geocentric. Other stories of Ascensions, Biblical and Pagan. The ascension of the Virgin Mary.

CHAP. V.—"THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY" - 119

Synopsis: A belief in this doctrine affirmed, though not really held. Jewish ideas about immortality. St. Paul's doctrine. Unsettled views of both Old and New Testament authors about bodily survival. The doctrine of the Church Fathers. Emphasis on the resuscitation of the actual flesh and bones of the body. Modern scepticism and modern clerical quibbles about the meaning of the word "body." Origin of the belief in survival of the body. Man's anxiety to believe the doctrine. Men justified in teaching what they believe to be true, but not justified in teaching a doctrine which they know to be untrue.

CHAP. VI.—MODERN SCEPTICISM - - - - 144

Synopsis: Unaccountable furtiveness of the Resurrection if it really took place. Metaphorical resurrections and spiritual regenerations. Palingenesis.

PAGE

Early Christians who did not believe in the Resurrection as a physical resuscitation. Modern clergy who fear openly to proclaim their beliefs when these differ from the crystallized dogmas inherited from the past. Endeavours to give new meanings to old words. None of the better educated of the clergy believe in the Resurrection of the Body, or in the Descent into Hell, or in the Ascension, but are prevented by fear of their ignorant colleagues and flocks from avowing their real opinions. Urgent necessity for acknowledgment of the true facts.

PART II

MIRACLES

CHAP. I.—THE GOSPEL MIRACLES - - - - 171

Synopsis : The casting out of devils. The Gadarene swine. The cursing of the fig-tree. The troubling of the waters at Bethesda. Miracles performed with the aid of spittle. Water turned into wine. Walking on the water. Multiplication of loaves and fishes. The fish with the tribute money. The miraculous darkness during the Crucifixion. The descent of tongues.

CHAP. II.—THE MIRACULOUS IN ANTIQUITY - - 193

Synopsis : The Thaumaturge. Medicine, magic, and miracles. The exorcism of devils. Belief in demoniacal possession held until quite modern times. Survivals of the superstition. Pagan workers of miracles. Scepticism of philosophers. Survival of Old Testament legends. Attribution of miraculous powers to famous personages, historical and mythical.

PAGE

CHAP. III.—MEDIEVAL MIRACLES - - - - 212

Synopsis: Thousands of post-apostolic miracles reported and believed in until after the Reformation. Attempts to find a reason for distinguishing between the credibility of Scripture and other miracles. Testimony in favour of the later miracles stronger than testimony in favour of the earlier. Examples of absurd and trivial motives for which miracles were said to have been performed. A selection of stories about miracles said to have been performed by saints. Miraculous feeding. Walking on the water. The value of faith. Beatrice the Nun. The "Holy House of Loreto," and other strange tales. The rise of scepticism. Commonness of miracles when men expected miracles, and the cessation of miracles when men ceased to expect them. Some modern miracles. Miraculous shrines. M. Coué and healing by suggestion. Note on a medieval revival.

CHAP. IV.—MODERN APOLOGISTS - - - - 242

Synopsis: Miracles in theory. The Uniformity of Nature. Belief in miracles shaken as soon as men learnt of the existence of natural laws. Attempts to distinguish between the Gospel and the Pagan miracles, and between the Gospel and the Medieval miracles. Appeals to prejudice and faith. The Catholic and the Protestant theories. Orthodox deprecation of the publication of unorthodox arguments.

APPENDIX I.—ST. GEORGE OF ENGLAND - - 255

„ II.—"LIFE'S TRUE VALUES" - - 258

„ III.—A MODERN THAUMATURGE - - 263

INDEX - - - - - - - - - - 265

PART I

THE RESURRECTION STORY

Chapter I

THE EVIDENCE FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

§ 1. *The Accounts of the Resurrection*

Scattered through the books of the New Testament there are very many references to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and in the Canonical Gospels there are four different accounts[1] of the events said to have taken place shortly before or after that occurrence; but there is no account whatever of the actual Resurrection itself, or of exactly when it took place, or of the manner in which the risen Jesus left the stone-closed tomb.[2] Even in Matthew's account—which, flatly contradicting the others, tells us how an angel rolled back the stone from the grave—Jesus is not said to have come out of the tomb, but to have already left it, and the stone is rolled back apparently only for the purpose of enabling the onlookers to gaze into the empty grave.

So, when we speak of the Resurrection stories, we are really speaking of the accounts given by the different evangelists, first of the discovery of the empty tomb, and, secondly, of the appearances of Jesus, after his crucifixion and burial, to His disciples.

In considering the evidence for the Resurrection, it will, perhaps, be most convenient to examine these two parts of the stories—the empty tomb and the appearances—separately, and to discuss in turn each evangelist's version of what took place.

[1] Matthew xxvii, 57–66, xxviii; Mark xv, 42–7, xvi; Luke xxiii, 50–6, xxiv; John xix, 38–42, xx, xxi. For appearances compare also 1 Corinthians xv, 4–8.

[2] In the "apocryphal" "Gospel of Peter" there is, however, an account, which will be quoted further on (see p. 16), of this exit.

As these versions differ so widely from each other that they cannot all four be correct records of the events, it is necessary to determine which story, or which part of each story, appears the most probable, or, at any rate, the least improbable.

§ 2. *Mark's Account of the Empty Tomb*

According to Mark, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome came very early on Sunday morning to the sepulchre. Though they were bringing with them spices with which to anoint the body of Jesus, they had made no arrangements for having the stone removed, and, as they went, they discussed how this was to be done, "for it was very great." However, on their arrival at the tomb they found that the stone had already been removed, so they entered the sepulchre and there found "a young man" clothed in a white garment, who at first caused them great alarm, but then re-assured them by saying that Jesus was risen, and that they must inform the disciples and Peter that He had gone to Galilee. On hearing this, the women fled trembling and amazed; but they did not tell Peter or anybody else, as they were too frightened to do so.

This is probably the oldest, and is certainly the simplest, of all the accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb. The behaviour of the women is, however, remarkably strange. They visit the tomb for the purpose of anointing the body, though in Palestine a two days' buried corpse would no longer be fit for anointment, and though they know that the entrance to the sepulchre is blocked by a large stone and that they have no means of moving it.[1] Still more remarkable, they see some one who informs them that their Master had risen from the dead, and who

[1] If this were drama, the author might consider it necessary to assign a motive for the entry of the characters upon the scene; and, in default of any adequate reason, might assign a most unlikely cause for the visit of the women to the tomb. But this is said to be history, and not dramatic fiction.

tells them to remind the disciples of an arrangement He had previously made, yet they remain absolutely silent. They say nothing to anybody about all this. They disobey the order they have been given, and tell no one the great news. That silence is certainly unfeminine; it is almost unhuman. That the women should remain silent when they had just learnt that this stupendous miracle—so important and so favourable to themselves and to the other followers of Jesus—had occurred is almost incredible. Women have often been portrayed as chatterboxes, but never, before or since, as remaining so mute after being ordered to speak, and having every incentive to speak. That they were afraid—of something unspecified—seems, in the circumstances, a most inadequate explanation. As part of a story which also relates that the disciples of Jesus were surprised at His appearances, it might have been considered necessary to explain how those disciples had not already heard about the empty tomb and the message; but as a record of actual occurrences this part of Mark's story seems full of improbabilities.

Yet, strange though it is, the behaviour of the women is not quite incredible, and, if we found that Mark's account of this episode was supported by the other historians of these events, there would be no reason for doubting its accuracy.

§ 3. *Matthew's Account of the Empty Tomb*

But, turning to the first Gospel in our New Testament, we find that Matthew tells a very different tale.

According to him, the chief priests and the Pharisees expected that the followers of Jesus would give out that He had risen from the dead, and they therefore got leave from Pilate to seal the stone and set a guard over it. Now an author, desirous of emphasizing the care with which the tomb was watched and the impossibility of the body having been removed, might, if he were not

particularly scrupulous about veracity in matters of detail, invent such a story. That the evangelists were not so scrupulous is proved by the very fact of the irreconcilable differences in their accounts. But is it probable that before the event the chief priests would already expect such a story to be put about? Even in those days the readiness of men to believe in resurrections was hardly so pronounced that a new story of that kind might be expected before it was actually told. Men might believe without hesitation in some long past miracle of that kind, but the priests and Pharisees would hardly, before the event, take steps to prevent the invention of a resurrection story. If the chief priests or Pilate heard such a story, they could challenge the followers of Jesus to produce Him, and thus disprove the truth of the story. Why, then, should they expect that a story so easy to refute was likely to be invented? It is alleged that they expected this story to be invented, because Jesus had foretold that He actually would rise again in three days; but this prophecy was not likely to be known by the priests and Pharisees when the disciples themselves knew nothing of it; and that the disciples did not know of it is asserted by all the evangelists. They had, we are told, scattered in dismay after the Crucifixion, and so little did they expect the Resurrection that they refused to believe the stories told (according to all the evangelists, except Mark) by the women about the empty tomb. So, if Matthew's story, in spite of its being contradicted by all the other evangelists, is correct, the saying that He would rise again was known only to those hostile to Jesus, and not to His disciples and friends. The cryptic sayings about the destruction of the temple and its rebuilding, and about Jonah in the whale's belly, if they were heard by the disciples, evidently conveyed no such meaning as this to them, "for as yet they knew not the Scripture that he must rise from the dead."[1]

[1] John xx, 9.

As far as this episode is concerned, therefore, Matthew's version seems more improbable than that of any of the other evangelists.

The next episode related is the arrival of the women—"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary," according to Matthew—at the tomb.

As Matthew has just told us that a guard had been placed over the tomb to prevent any interference with it, he cannot, like Mark and Luke, allege a desire to anoint the body of Jesus as the reason for the women's visit to the tomb. The reason for their visit, according to him, was merely "to see the sepulchre" [again]. According to John, Nicodemus had already anointed the body before its burial, so that evangelist also omits the women's preparation of spices.

Matthew next introduces an entirely new episode into his story. Mark, Luke, and John all distinctly state that the women, on their arrival at the tomb, found the stone already moved[1] from the grave, and they do not inform us how the great stone was moved. Now, Matthew enlightens us upon this point, though his manner of doing so involves a flat contradiction of the other evangelists, and, moreover, raises an even more serious question. How did Jesus leave the tomb without the stone being moved? There is no answer to be found to this question save by alleging a further miracle and one unmentioned by any of the chroniclers, and by relegating the miraculous appearance of the angel who appears on the scene, for the purpose of rolling back the stone, to the category of

[1] "Rolled away" according to Mark and Luke, "Taken away" (the Greek word implies lifting) according to John, who describes the tomb as a grave in a garden, and not as a chamber in the rock as Matthew and Mark do, or as built of hewn stone as Luke does. Tombs at Jerusalem were commonly cut out of the side of cliffs. The authors of Matthew and Mark appear to have been aware of this custom, but the two other evangelists seem not to have been acquainted with it. From the entrance to a rock tomb in the side of a hill, a stone would be "rolled away"; from a grave in a garden it would have to be lifted up or taken away, as John mentions. John, moreover, says that "the other disciple" stooped down to look into the grave.

unnecessary miracles. For Matthew informs us that there was a great earthquake and "the angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it," and that "for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." But the angel rolls back the stone, not to let Jesus out, but to show the women that the body is no longer in the tomb.

The words in which the angel announces that Jesus is already risen from the dead are very remarkable. He does not say that Jesus, really being God, could not actually die, or anything of that sort, but announces the Resurrection as if the fact of some one rising from the dead was not at all surprising.

Again, that the guard should, as Matthew next tells us, take money to say that the body had been removed would not be surprising; but that the soldiers would none of them, after taking the bribe, privately relate the real facts to their friends is very difficult to believe. Resurrections from the dead are not such common and such trivial events as not to be spoken of after being witnessed; and those same soldiers, we are told, had almost died of fright when the earthquake took place and the angel rolled back the stone to disclose the empty tomb, so they had evidently been impressed by what they had seen, and were not impassive spectators of an event which appeared to them unimportant.

Moreover, that Roman soldiers could so effectively be bribed to confess themselves guilty of sleeping on their post—an offence punishable then as now, and even more certainly then than now, with death—is extremely unlikely. They might take the proffered money, but they would hardly place much reliance upon the promise to "secure them" from trouble. That they should merely keep silence, as—according to the Gospel of Peter[1]

[1] See below, p. 16.

—they were bidden to do by Pilate, is very improbable; but that they should concoct a story about sleeping on guard, and thus run the risk of death merely to please or to keep faith with some Jews, is as nearly incredible as anything can be which is not an absolute physical impossibility.[1]

Members of the military profession have, perhaps always, and probably on account of their willingness to suffer death and other discomforts for what must appear to the civilian to be a totally inadequate wage, had a reputation for stupidity; but these particular soldiers must have been more than stupid—they must have been entirely devoid of any intelligence whatever, if the sight of a miracle so stupendous did not convert them, or at any rate make them inquire further about Jesus and His followers.

Nor are these doings the kind of events which the whole Sanhedrim—including such men as Gamaliel, who, according to the Acts,[2] was in doubt as to whether Christianity was the work of men or of God, and (according to Mark and Luke) Joseph of Arimathea himself—would conspire to conceal. Is it at all likely—particularly as Matthew alone of all the New Testament authors mentions it—that, on hearing that such an event as a resurrection had taken place, all the principal Jews assembled in council would agree to keep silence about it, and would bribe the soldiers not to speak of it? In all their number would there not be found a few who were convinced, by a miracle so striking, that this Jesus was not a common mortal? Or are we to believe that all the most distinguished men, the councillors of the Jewish nation, regarded a resurrection as so unimportant a matter that they thought only of not allowing the populace to get

[1] On the other hand, the reason given in the Gospel of Peter for Pilate's action in this matter is even more improbable than anything in Matthew's account. "Peter" relates that Pilate, realizing that he had crucified "the Son of God," said that it was better to be guilty of a very great sin before God than to be stoned by the Jews, and that therefore silence must be kept.

[2] Acts v, 38–9.

excited about it? Would not some of them have trembled at the thought that this Jesus, whom they had but three days earlier sent to his death, was really a supernatural being? Surely in the world's history there has never been another council so united, or other councillors so taciturn on an occasion so apt for variance and garrulity! That the story—that his disciples came by night and took away the body of Jesus—was current among the Jews, as Matthew[1] tells us, may have been true when "Matthew" wrote his gospel, but that the story was deliberately invented in a full session of the Sanhedrim is exceedingly improbable.

It is far more probable that the Jews, when they first heard the Christian story, retorted that if the tomb was empty the followers of Jesus must themselves have removed His body, and that, this retort becoming common in controversy, Matthew's story was designed to account for it.[2]

In view of the fact that Matthew's story is uncorroborated by any other evangelist, and, in many of its details, flatly contradicted by all the other evangelists, even the orthodox may concede that it is a dramatic and romantic embellishment of the original story. Indeed,

[1] Matthew xxviii, 13–15.

[2] So far as we can tell, this Jewish retort that the disciples of Jesus must have removed His body was never heard until the second century was well advanced, as previous to that time no reference to the Gospel Jesus is made by any unconverted Jews or by any Gentiles; and, so far as we can tell from non-Christian writings, both unconverted Jews and Gentiles were ignorant of His ever having existed. But by the middle of the second century the retort was evidently quite common. Justin Martyr, writing at that period, states in his "Dialogue with Trypho" that the Jews said: "His disciples stole Him by night from the tomb where He had been laid when He was unloosed from the cross, and they now deceive men, saying that He has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven." The Jews, as represented by Trypho, also accused the Christians—so we learn from Justin Martyr—of being Atheists: "An atheistical and impious heresy had arisen from a certain Jesus, a Galilean impostor....." But these things were written, and these accusations were made, in the middle of the second century, and so they cannot be taken as any better evidence of what actually occurred than the statements of the Canonical Gospels, written about the same time, whose evidence we distrust on the score of their lateness and their contradictions.

if they place any reliance upon one of the other accounts they must discard Matthew's because of the impossibility of reconciling his with any of theirs.

In one respect, and in one respect only, is Matthew's version preferable to that of Mark. With greater probability than the latter, Matthew describes the women as joyfully anxious to tell the good news to the disciples instead of as remaining fearfully silent.[1]

§ 4. *Luke's Account of the Empty Tomb*

If we now turn to Luke, we find that the first visitors to the tomb were "Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them."[2] The three women of Mark and the two of Matthew have become a larger party, even if the personnel of the party has not otherwise changed.[3]

These women find the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. They enter the tomb, and find that the body of Jesus is no longer there. Then there appear to them "two men.....in shining garments," who—unlike the two angels[4] in John's version who ask Mary Magdalene why she weeps, but say nothing more—ask the women why they seek the living among the dead, and remind them of a prophecy of Jesus that he would rise again on the third day after being crucified. And Luke adds that the women "remembered his words," though Mark and Matthew imply that the disciples did not remember any such prophecy, and John explicitly states that they did not know that "he must rise again from the dead";[5] and —more remarkable still—according to Luke himself only

[1] The only other story of the soldiers being bribed to keep silence is to be found in an apocryphal gospel, and in that story, to which we shall refer later, it is Pilate who bribes them, and not the members of the Sanhedrim.

[2] Luke xxiv, 10.

[3] Joanna for Salome (?). John mentions only Mary Magdalene, and implies, though he does not explicitly state, that she was alone.

[4] Mark says one young man; Matthew says one angel who actually removed the stone; Luke two men; and John two angels. All differ as to what these beings did and said.

[5] John xx, 9.

three verses further on,[1] the eleven disciples to whom the women immediately reported these events, also did not remember it, as the words of the women "seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." The disbelief of the disciples which the evangelists emphasize is all the more strange if, as recorded in the Gospels, they had previously seen Jesus raise other people from the dead, walk on the sea, and perform other great deeds—even if they had never heard of the Virgin Birth story, or that He had been begotten by God.

Luke's assertion that the women immediately informed the eleven disciples of what they had heard is, of course, in flat contradiction to Mark's statement that they told no one; and Luke's description of this party of women who crowded into the sepulchre being alarmed at the sight of the "two men in shining garments" is irreconcilable with John's description of Mary Magdalene's interview with the "two angels."

Moreover, the speech delivered by Luke's two men differs in one very important respect, besides differing in minor details, from the speeches delivered by the corresponding celestial beings in the other accounts. As to the actual words used all the evangelists differ considerably, but Mark and Matthew agree in respect of making the being say that Jesus was going to Galilee, and Matthew emphasizes this by describing Jesus Himself as repeating the order that the disciples should go to Galilee to meet Him there. But Luke, whose story tells only of appearances in Jerusalem, alters the speech of the angelic beings into "remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee," thereby retaining the word "Galilee" but changing the meaning of the speech.[2] John's two angels

[1] Luke xxiv, 11.

[2] According to Mark, the disciples were to go to Galilee to meet Jesus "as He had previously arranged." According to Matthew, that instruction was not originally from Jesus, but from the angel ("Lo, I have told you"); and when Jesus Himself repeats the order to His disciples to go to Galilee He does not refer to any previous arrangement or order of any kind.

say no more than "Woman, why weepest thou?", and then Jesus appears and makes a speech which is totally different from that reported by Matthew, who is the only other evangelist who reports any episode remotely resembling this appearance.[1]

§ 5. *John's Account of the Empty Tomb*

Turning now to John's account of these events, we find that only Mary Magdalene is said to have visited the tomb. We hear nothing of Mary the mother of James, nor of Mark's Salome, nor of Luke's Joanna and other women. And on her arrival at the tomb, finding the stone rolled away, she, without entering the tomb or making any further inquiry, ran back to tell Peter and "the other disciple whom Jesus loved" that "they had taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre." This would have been mere surmise, and a very strange surmise too; so, as far as this episode is concerned, Luke's account—which informs us that it was not until after the interview with the two men in shining garments that the women told any one what they had seen—is the more probable. According to Luke, however, it was not only to Peter and "the other disciple" that the women told their tale, but to "the eleven and all the rest."[2]

According to both Matthew and Mark, the disciples, when Jesus was arrested at Gethsemane, "all forsook Him and fled"; and in some of the "apocryphal" gospels it is stated that all the disciples, regarding the crucifixion as proof that their belief in Jesus was misplaced—since He who had declared Himself to be the Son of God was unable to save himself, and God was apparently unwilling to save Him—"forsook Him and fled," and that they did not return to Jerusalem until after they had heard of the Resurrection. Mark and Matthew appear, therefore, to have followed this tradition of a flight from Jerusalem, whereas the other evangelists followed the tradition that the disciples remained in Jerusalem and that the appearances took place there.

[1] Matthew places this appearance to the women much later in time than John does, as Matthew's two women have left the tomb when it takes place, whereas Mary, according to John, is still at the tomb when she sees Jesus.

[2] Mark, as we have mentioned above, states that the women told no one. Matthew states only that after the angel had moved the stone and addressed them the women "did run to bring his disciples word." He does not tell us how the message was received, nor of any further visit to the tomb, for he lays the scene of all further events in Galilee and not at Jerusalem, as do the other evangelists.

However, though according to Luke the announcement was made to the eleven, Peter alone visits the tomb, sees that it is empty, and departs "wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." John says that both Peter and the other disciple ran towards the tomb, and that the other disciple outran Peter and was the first person to look into the empty tomb; that after Peter and the other disciple had both examined the tomb and found it empty, save for the grave clothes, they went away and left Mary weeping alone; and that then Mary looked into the sepulchre and saw "two angels in white," and spoke with them. We are not vouchsafed any explanation as to how these two angels arrived in the sepulchre, which but a few minutes before had been found by the two disciples to be empty except for the grave clothes; but perhaps in the case of angelic visitants such an explanation was considered unnecessary. Anyhow, the angels only say "Woman, why weepest thou?"; whereas Luke's "two men" asked why the women sought the living among the dead, and told them that "He is risen," and reminded them how He spake while yet in Galilee, prophesying His death and Resurrection. Matthew's angel also announced the Resurrection, telling the two women, not of what Jesus said when in Galilee, but that He was going to Galilee; and Mark's young man said much the same as Matthew's angel, except that the going to Galilee is spoken of as a previous arrangement.

Then Mary turns round and sees some one whom she supposes to be the gardener, but discovers, after a few words, to be Jesus Himself. Jesus tells her not to touch Him, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God"—words which can hardly be reconciled with the peculiar relationship with God claimed for Jesus by the Virgin Birth story, of which, however, John has never made any mention.

The account is then brought more into accordance with Luke by the statement that Mary reported these events to "the disciples"—presumably the rest of the eleven.

One of the most curious points about John's account is his statement that when "the other disciple," who had outrun Peter and looked into, but not gone into, the sepulchre, did eventually enter the tomb "he saw and believed. For as yet they knew not the scriptures, that He must rise again from the dead."[1] What was it that the disciple believed merely on assuring himself that the tomb was empty? If it was not in the Resurrection, why should knowledge of "the scriptures" (which means Old Testament prophecies) be more necessary for belief than any actual evidence—such as it was—of the actual occurrence? It seems that the author of this account was here trying to combine two contradictory traditions—the tradition that the disciples did not at first believe in the Resurrection, and the tradition that the mere sight of the empty tomb sufficed to make them believe in it.

§ 6. *Accounts in "Apocryphal" and Lost Gospels of the Empty Tomb*

Having now examined and compared the Canonical accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb, and found that the four evangelists disagree as to the actual events which took place, let us turn to the "Apocrypha" and see if we can find anything which throws more light upon what actually occurred, or, at any rate, upon the primitive tradition.

In "The Gospel of Peter"[2] is to be found the only

[1] John xx, 8–9.

[2] All that survives of this gospel is a fragment, believed to be of fifth-century writing, found in 1886 in a grave at Panopolis. But we know from Eusebius that the gospel was in use in part of the diocese of Antioch at the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, and it is thought, by some of those competent to judge such matters, that it was in existence in the first half of the second century, and that it may have been in use as early as or even earlier than any of our Canonical Gospels, though by others it is considered to be later than our Gospels.

known account—not, indeed, of the resurrection (or coming to life again of the dead body), but of the manner in which Jesus left the tomb.

This account begins with a description of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus—a description which differs in many important respects from the accounts in the Canonical Gospels. It then continues as follows:—

> Now on the night when the Lord's day was drawing on, as the soldiers kept guard by two and two in a watch, there was a great voice in heaven, and they saw the heavens opened, and two men descend from thence with much light, and draw nigh unto the tomb. And the stone which had been cast at the door rolled away of itself and made way in part, and the tomb was opened, and both the young men entered in. The soldiers, therefore, when they saw it, awakened the centurion and the elders (for they were there also keeping watch); and as they told the things that they had seen, again they see three men coming forth from the tomb, two of them supporting the other, and a cross following them; and the head of the two reached to heaven, but that of him who was led by them overpassed the heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens saying, "Didst thou preach to them that sleep?" And a response was heard from the cross, "Yea."[1]

The account goes on to relate how, shortly afterwards, "the heavens again appeared to open, and a man descended and entered into the sepulchre"; how Pilate gave orders that the centurion and the soldiers should say nothing about these events; and how, "at dawn on the Lord's day," Mary Magdalene and "her female friends" visited the tomb and found "a young man" sitting in the midst of it.[2]

Apart from its own interest as an example of the kind of tradition current among second-century Christians,

[1] Translation taken from "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," by Kirsopp Lake, who quotes Professor Swete's edition of the Gospel of Peter.

[2] The fragment ends without recording any appearance of the risen Lord; but, as just before it ends it mentions that Peter, Andrew, and Levi went to sea with their nets, it is probable that the gospel in its complete state described an appearance in Galilee very similar to that described in the Appendix (chap. xxi) of John (see below, p. 26).

this account is worthy of notice for the light which it throws upon some incidents recorded by the Canonical evangelists. The way in which the great stone was removed or moved itself, the two men who first descend from heaven, and the one man who subsequently descends, are incidents that explain much which we find inadequately described in our Bibles.[1]

In the "apocryphal" gospel of Nicodemus[2] one of the soldiers guarding the tomb is represented as relating that as they watched "there was an earthquake: and we saw an angel of God roll away the stone of the sepulchre and sit upon it; and his countenance was like lightning, and his garment like snow; and we became through fear like persons dead." The angel then informs the women that Jesus is risen, but nothing is said about the manner in which Jesus left the tomb. The rolling away of the stone seems to be introduced for dramatic purposes—to enable the women to look into the tomb—and not for the purpose of letting Jesus out.[3]

These are the only references in any uncanonical gospels to the discovery of the empty tomb, or to the manner in which it became empty.

The uncanonical gospels, therefore, do not throw much light upon early tradition, though, perhaps, Peter's two men who first descend from heaven[4] and one man who subsequently descends are the originals of the one or two persons spoken of by the Canonical evangelists as occupying the tomb.

[1] The question about preaching to them that sleep is, of course, a reference to that descent into Hell which forms an article of our creeds, though it is not mentioned in any Canonical Gospel (see below, chap. iii).

[2] Also known as the "Acts of Pontius Pilate"—a pious forgery, probably written towards the end of the fourth century.

[3] In this same gospel we are told that the elders of the Jews shut Joseph of Arimathea up in a chamber where there was no window, and sealed the door; and that Joseph escaped from the chamber without breaking the seals.

[4] These were usually identified with the "archangels" Michael and Gabriel, whose office it was to conduct the dead to heaven. In "The Ascension of Isaiah" Gabriel is on this occasion identified with or confused with "The Holy Spirit." That Michael and Gabriel carried Jesus out of the tomb on their shoulders was the generally accepted tradition.

Peter, Nicodemus, and Matthew all seem to follow the same tradition in its main outlines, though their stories differ greatly in detail; and that tradition has no appearance of being the primitive one, being more elaborate and far more improbable than those followed by John, Luke, or Mark. Whether Peter followed Matthew, or Matthew followed Peter, or both followed some earlier author, is therefore a question of pedantic interest only. At any rate, their accounts are incompatible with those of the other Gospel authors, and this is especially the case with regard to the placing of a guard over the tomb—an episode which would have prevented the women from intending to anoint the body with spices, as is elsewhere told us was their reason for visiting the tomb. According to Peter, there was a great concourse of people—"elders and scribes" as well as soldiers—watching the tomb; and these people sealed the stone, which they had placed against its door, with seven seals before they sat down to guard it. If anything of that kind occurred, Mark's account must be entirely wrong; yet Mark is the earliest and by far the most probable of all the accounts we have of the events that took place when the tomb was discovered to be empty.

§ 7. *Accounts of the Appearances of the Risen Jesus*

After describing the discovery of the empty tomb, the evangelists proceed to describe the appearances of the risen Lord to His disciples; and again we find that their versions differ so greatly that they cannot all be correct, and that therefore it is necessary, if we wish to know what really took place or what was the earliest tradition, to compare their accounts and determine which of them or which part of each one of them appears the most probable or—since we are studying the miraculous—the least improbable.

Though the four Gospels contain the only Canonical accounts of most of these appearances, there is also in the

Epistles a list of the post-Resurrection appearances, and in the Acts three accounts of one appearance which is not recorded in the Gospels.

The list and all these accounts must be examined in turn, but before we embark upon that examination it is necessary to notice that the account given in our present "Gospel according to St. Mark" did not form part of the original Mark.

How the original Mark ended no one knows, as with verse 8 of chapter xvi ends all that has come down to us of the original Gospel. This is admitted even by orthodox scholars. The remainder of the chapter is not to be found in the oldest and best manuscripts; the words, expressions, and general style of what now follows after that verse differ considerably from those used throughout the rest of the Gospel. What follows does not fit well on to or into the story which ends at verse 8; and in every way this remainder has the appearance of a late addition. With verse 9 the story begins again, just as if the first eight verses had never been written. The editor who added the last twelve verses seems to have been acquainted with the stories told by Luke and John, and to have written his own account from his recollection of those versions, starting with an appearance to Mary Magdalene, "out of whom he had formerly cast seven devils," which should—if John's account be correct—have already been related when the visit of the women to the tomb was being described. The real "Mark" had, when telling the story of the discovery of the empty tomb, omitted to relate this appearance—in fact, his story precludes any such appearance—so the pseudo-Mark introduces it without any details as to time and place, but implicitly some time after the visit to the tomb was concluded.

Mark had already written that the women told no one of what they had heard at the empty tomb; the pseudo-Mark re-introduces Mary Magdalene, who now, after seeing Jesus, tells the disciples, who, however, "believed not."

That the original Mark ended with verse 8 is most improbable. That ending would be too abrupt, and the story is obviously incomplete. It is probable that the original ending was found not to support the beliefs of subsequent Christians, and that it was therefore suppressed, a new ending being provided by a hand whose orthodoxy was superior to that of his predecessor, even though his literary attainments were inferior.[1]

As this pseudo-Mark account of the Resurrection appearances is later in origin than the other accounts, its further consideration had better be postponed until after an examination of the other Gospel stories.

§ 8. *Matthew's Account of the Appearances*

According to Matthew, the first appearance of Jesus after his death was to the women—Mary Magdalene and the other Mary—on their way from the empty tomb to tell the disciples what the angel had said. To the women Jesus repeats the angelic message to the disciples, sending them word to meet Him in Galilee.

The second and last appearance recorded by Matthew was to the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee. There "they worshipped him, but some doubted," and Jesus gives them instructions to proselytize.

The oldest version of verse 19 (chapter xxviii) is: "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations in my name." This is the version repeatedly quoted by Eusebius, the great ecclesiastical historian who lived at the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century. It was not altered into its present form until the fourth century was well advanced and the Trinitarian doctrine had been formulated. Then the last two verses of our present Matthew were substituted for the original verse 19, and the formula "baptizing.....in the name of

[1] For suggestions as to how the original Mark ended, and as to how the new ending was affixed, see Kirsopp Lake's "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," pp. 78-9, 120-4, 143-5.

the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" first introduced into a New Testament book.

Even the version known to Eusebius was probably a late addition to Matthew, as the injunction to make disciples or to teach all nations is out of keeping with the rest of the Gospel, in which Jesus is represented as saying that He Himself is sent only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel,"[1] and as telling His disciples not to go to the Gentiles or Samaritans, but "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."[2] This limitation of the mission we find continually emphasized until we come to the last two verses of the Gospel. He tells His disciples that they will eventually "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,"[3] and never mentions, except to forbid, any preaching to other nations.

Moreover, according to the Acts of the Apostles, the disciples, years after the death of Jesus, still maintained that their mission should be confined to the Jews. Yet here, in these last two verses of Matthew, without reason given, the whole former policy is reversed. And in the version we now have not only is this policy reversed, but a reference to the Trinity is introduced, though the Trinity doctrine has never before been mentioned, and was, as a matter of fact, never heard of until more than two hundred years had elapsed after the date assigned to the death of Jesus. Obviously the verses were added or altered a long time after the original Gospel had been compiled, and added or altered for the purpose of justifying the universalism which had been adopted by all Christians, and the new Trinitarian doctrine which was in process of being taught by some.

Moreover, though Luke and the pseudo-Mark both relate that Jesus, on the occasion of His last appearance,

[1] Matthew xv, 24. [2] Matthew x, 5, 6.

[3] Matthew xix, 28. Note the twelve thrones, which are necessitated by the twelve tribes, but which are incompatible with the eventual treachery and dismissal of Judas.

gave injunctions that His disciples should preach to all nations, their versions of His speech are entirely different in every respect save that of having given that injunction.

§ 9. *Luke's Account of the Appearances*

Luke, as we have already seen, alters the angel's message as given by Matthew, that the disciples should go to Galilee, into a message which includes the words, "Remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee." We are therefore not surprised to find that Luke says nothing about any appearance in Galilee, and tells us that both the appearances which he describes took place in or near Jerusalem. So emphatic is Luke about Jerusalem being the scene of these appearances that he quotes Jesus as directing the disciples not to leave the city until they shall have been "embued with power from on high"—received the gift of the Holy Spirit—after His Ascension.

The first appearance, according to Luke, was to Cleopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus.

Jesus, according to their story, accompanied these two disciples on their seven and a-half miles' walk to Emmaus, or at any rate on a great part of it, and remained with them for supper when they reached that village. During all this time Jesus and the disciples discoursed together, yet they did not recognize Him until the supper was well advanced or concluded; and as soon as they did recognize Him He vanished out of their sight. "..... and their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight."

What are we to understand from this story? How can we account for two disciples walking and talking for so long with their Master and about His own death, and about the rumour of the empty tomb, without recognizing Him? Cleopas even says to him: "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem?" Is it a Jesus of flesh and blood who thus

vanishes in the act of giving them the bread he had blessed ?

And when Cleopas and the other disciple report this occurrence to the eleven at Jerusalem who is it that says: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon"? According to Luke, there has as yet been no appearance to Simon Peter. Was, then, "the other disciple" either Peter or another Simon ? Or is this a fragment of some other tradition—Paul's perhaps[1]—embedded in a story with which it really disagrees ? Or is it an interpolation ?

As the first appearance ends with a sudden vanishing, so the second and—according to Luke—last appearance begins with a ghost-like suddenness. As the eleven sit at meat they suddenly discover Jesus standing in their midst. But in spite of this, or perhaps so as to cancel its natural implications, details are now given for the purpose of showing that His body is real and not visionary. Jesus shows the disciples his hands and feet, and, as "they yet believed not for joy," eats some broiled fish and some honeycomb. Then He delivers a speech which differs entirely from the speech made to the eleven according to Matthew,[2] though its general purport is the same—namely, that the disciples should preach to all nations. Then Luke describes the Ascension—an event of which no other evangelist tells us anything.[3]

§ 10. *John's Account of the Appearances*

John, as we have already seen when discussing the Gospel accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb, states that the first appearance of the risen Jesus was to Mary Magdalene as she stood at the side of the grave. The other evangelists evidently knew nothing about this appearance, as their stories are altogether incompatible with its occurrence.

[1] 1 Corinthians xv.
[2] According to Luke, this takes place at Jerusalem ; and, according to Matthew, in Galilee.
[3] The Ascension story will be discussed later on. See Chapter IV.

John next tells of an appearance which corresponds with that described by Luke as taking place to the eleven disciples. John says nothing of the appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, but evidently the appearance on the evening of the day of the Resurrection corresponds with Luke's only account of an appearance to the assembled disciples. In both cases Jesus announces Himself with the words "Peace be unto you";[1] in one case he shows the disciples his hands and his feet, in the other his hands and his side, so as to identify Himself and assure them that He was not a ghost. But there are some important differences between the two versions. John emphasizes what Luke has implied about the spirit-like entrance of Jesus into the room, by explicitly stating that the doors were shut; and, so as to lead up to the next appearance which he is going to relate, he states that Thomas was absent from the gathering. He also states that Jesus "breathed on them," and thus embued them with "the Holy Ghost"; whereas Luke states that Jesus directed the disciples to remain in Jerusalem until at some future time they should receive the Holy Spirit.

John then describes another appearance eight days later; and therefore, if Luke's story is correct, eight days after the Ascension (of which John tells us nothing) has really taken place.

This appearance is not mentioned by any other evangelist. It takes place in similar circumstances to the last one—Jesus coming into the room in spite of closed doors—and all the eleven disciples, including Thomas on this occasion, being present. Its importance from a doctrinal point of view lies in the statement that the sceptical Thomas was invited to look on the hands of Jesus and to thrust his hand in His side, and was convinced that He was not a spectre; and in the saying: "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they

[1] The phrase with which all Arabs greet each other to-day.

that have not seen, and yet have believed." Thus does John seek to show that the physical body of Jesus has risen from the grave, though with that body Jesus is said by him to have entered a room through closed doors! Thus does John seek to show that there is a virtue in believing the story he tells.

With the description of this appearance, and with the last two verses of chapter xx, the original "Gospel according to St. John" ended.

Commentators of every degree of orthodoxy are agreed upon this, and no one with any critical sense is likely to doubt it after reading those last two verses.

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

This peroration sets forth the object with which the book was written—to identify Jesus with the Christ—and concludes the book. The next chapter is an afterthought even if it was written, as a few critics still maintain, by the same hand as that which wrote the original Gospel. Presumably, the motive for adding this chapter was to introduce a Galilean appearance, and thus bring John—who had hitherto mentioned only appearances in Jerusalem—into some sort of agreement with Matthew; to emphasize the importance of Peter, and therefore of the "Petrine" form of Christianity; and to provide an explanation for the fact that John and the other disciples had died before the Parousia, or "second coming," had taken place. When this appendix was added to the Gospel it had become urgently necessary to explain why Christ had not, as some Christians expected He would, triumphantly returned to earth before the death of His beloved disciple. A traditional saying had to be explained away, as the opponents of Christianity pointed out that the primitive Christians had awaited a return of their

Lord, and that He had never returned. So the author of this chapter tells us that Jesus had not really said "He shall not die before I return," but "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"—a retort most unlike any other saying attributed to Jesus; a churlish, petulant retort quite out of keeping with the circumstances in which it is said to have been made.

However, from the point of view of our present inquiry the most important event recorded in this appendix is a third appearance to the disciples[1]—the fourth appearance in all if that to Mary Magdalene is also counted.

Seven of the disciples go fishing, and, after toiling all night, have caught nothing, when Jesus appears on the shore and tells them to cast their nets on the right side of the ship. Forthwith the net becomes so full of fish that the disciples "were not able to draw it," though eventually they drew it in and landed 153 great fishes.[2]

Thus the miraculous draught of fishes is transferred from the early days of the ministry of Jesus[3] until after His resurrection.

Of this appearance a much longer description is given than of any of the others, as, besides an account of the fishing, it contains a good deal of discourse—all of it with a doctrinal purpose and of a metaphorical nature, and most of it concerned with the missionary labours to be undertaken by the disciples.

No other author, canonical or apocryphal, mentions this appearance, the scene of which is laid on the shore of the sea of Tiberias in Galilee. The chapter and the amended gospel end, as did the original John, without

[1] "This is now the third time that Jesus shewed Himself to His disciples after that he was risen from the dead" (xxi, 14).

[2] The number 153 was regarded as a mystic number. (It is the sum of all the numbers from 1 to 17.) It was, moreover, believed that there were exactly 153 different species of fish, so the number symbolizes all fish; and the story symbolizes the drawing-in of all nations by the disciples when they became fishers of men.

[3] Cf. Luke v, 1–11. Mark i, 17–20 evidently also enshrines the same tradition.

any information being given as to the final disappearance of Jesus.

§ 11. *The Pseudo-Mark Account of the Appearance*

The pseudo-Mark account of the appearances of Jesus begins, as we have seen above,[1] at verse 9 of chapter xvi, with the story of an appearance to Mary Magdalene. This appearance is intended, it seems, to correspond with the appearance to Mary Magdalene recorded by John alone of the other evangelists, but its time and its scene have been altered so as to make it as far as possible compatible with what the original Mark had related.

The next appearance—"in another form unto two of them"—evidently corresponds to the appearance, of which Luke gives a detailed account, to Cleopas and another disciple on their walk to Emmaus. But this pseudo-Mark account[2] is a casual reference to, rather than a description of, the appearance. It was probably written for readers who would be already cognisant of the story which otherwise Luke alone tells, and is chiefly remarkable because of the curious expression "in another form," which seems to imply that the appearance to Mary Magdalene was of a different nature from the appearance now being referred to.

The third and last appearance mentioned by the pseudo-Mark evidently corresponds with the second appearance recorded by Luke—that to the eleven disciples as they sat at meat in a room in Jerusalem; but the account of this appearance also is more of a casual reference to an already known story than a description, and the discourse said to have been delivered by Jesus on this occasion differs entirely from the corresponding speech in Luke, and from the last speech recorded in Matthew, though it, like them, contains the injunction to preach the Gospel.

The new version of this speech is as follows[3]:—

> Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every

[1] See Section 7. [2] xvi, 12-13. [3] Mark xvi, 15-18.

> creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

How different is all this from the Gospel teaching! Belief and baptism, not good works, have become the requisites of salvation; damnation the lot of the unbeliever! The signs of a believer will be that he can not only heal the sick, but cast out devils, handle venomous snakes, and drink poison with impunity!

Is it possible for any modern Christians to believe that their Saviour condemned to damnation all unbelievers, or that he promised that believers would "cast out devils" and would be immune from snake bite and other poisons,[1] or that the author of this passage could bear witness that the Lord was sitting on the right hand of God?

For the Gospel ends, not with an account of the Ascension—Luke alone gives that—but with the bald statement that Jesus "was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God"—a statement which not only reveals the author's ignorance of the wonderful event described by Luke, but also the pseudo-Mark's anthropomorphic conception of God.

It is hardly surprising that even the orthodox are willing to reject as spurious the last twelve verses of our Gospel according to St. Mark; it is only strange that those in authority should not openly proclaim that they do so.

[1] In the Middle Ages it was firmly believed that all really virtuous believers must have had and used miraculous powers; so, when the regulations (which are still observed) for the canonization of the saintly were first made, it was laid down that evidence would be required that the candidate had in fact performed miracles. Since then the name of no person has been entered in the calendar of saints unless he or she has been proved, to the satisfaction of the Holy See, to have performed miracles. The idea that certain favoured persons could handle poisonous snakes with impunity is to be found expressed in the writings of pagan poets. "Oscula horrendis jungunt impune venenis," Manilius, v. 385. Virgil, Ovid, and Lucian have similar passages.

§ 12. *Luke's Reference in Acts to His Previous Account of the Appearances*

At the beginning of "The Acts of the Apostles"[1] Luke refers to his own previous account of the appearances, but tells us nothing new about them, though he shows us how loosely traditions were kept and reported by stating that Jesus, who, according to his own previous account in the Gospel, has ascended to heaven within twenty-four hours of his first appearance, really remained on earth for forty days after that event; and by putting into the mouth of Jesus a speech quite differently worded from the one he has previously reported in his Gospel as being uttered on the corresponding occasion.

Luke's accounts of the Ascension will be discussed later,[2] and, as all other accounts in the Acts or in any other books of the New Testament are of an appearance to Paul which the evangelists do not mention, we must now turn our attention to Paul's list of the Resurrection appearances, and to his accounts of the appearance to himself.

§ 13. *The Appearance to Paul*

It is implied by all the evangelists that they have traced the earthly life of Jesus to its ultimate conclusion. Luke, in fact, definitely describes that conclusion, and informs us in his Gospel that it took place within twenty-four hours of His first appearance after His death, and in the Acts that it took place forty days after that first appearance. Yet in one of the Epistles, and in the Acts of the Apostles, we find references to, and accounts of, an appearance to Paul of which no mention has been made in any of the Gospels, and which could not have taken place until long after the events described by the evangelists. Of what happened to Jesus in the interval

[1] i, 1-8. [2] See Chapter IV.

between the last events recorded in the Gospels and this appearance at least two years later to Paul we are told nothing; but when we have studied the accounts of that appearance, and Paul's own comment upon it, we shall perhaps be able to draw some approximately correct inferences as to Paul's own ideas about that matter.

In the Epistles there is no description of this appearance, but only references to and comments upon it. In the Acts of the Apostles, however, there are no less than three detailed descriptions of it, and to these we must now refer.

The first of these descriptions is to be found in Acts ix;[1] and it is not given by Paul, but by the author of Acts speaking in the third person; the second is to be found in Acts xxii,[2] and purports to be a verbatim report, in the first person, of Paul's speech in Jerusalem to the Jews; and the third is to be found in Acts xxvi,[3] and purports to be a verbatim report, in the first person, of Paul's speech to Agrippa.

The first of these descriptions, therefore, is supposed to be Luke's version of an account given to him by Paul, and the last two are supposed to be Paul's own words describing the appearance.

Yet, on comparing the three descriptions, we find some notable differences of detail which must be carefully considered if we wish to discover the exact nature of this appearance and how much reliance can be placed upon Paul's interpretation of it. In the first account it is said that Paul's companions heard a voice, but saw no one; whereas in the second account it is said that Paul's companions heard nothing, but saw a light. In the third nothing is definitely said about what they saw or heard, but it is implied that they saw the light.

Paul himself, according to all three versions, saw only (1) a light, (2) a great light, (3) a light "above the bright-

[1] Verses 3 *et seq.* [2] Verses 6 *et seq.* [3] Verses 13 *et seq.*

ness of the sun." The time was "midday" or "about noon," but beyond this "light," which he somehow distinguishes in the bright sunlight of noon, he sees nothing, though he hears a voice.

According to the first account, Paul's companions stood speechless, though according to the third they fell to the ground. In the second we are told that they were afraid, but not whether they remained standing or fell to the ground.

According to the first account, the voice says: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"; and Paul answers: "Who art thou, Lord?" "The Lord" then says: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks"; and, in answer to a further question by Paul, continues: "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

This account then goes on to tell how one Ananias also had a vision of Jesus, and was given orders by Him how to act. In obedience to these orders Ananias visits Paul, who had been blind ever since seeing the bright light three days earlier, and restores his sight to him.

According to the second account, the voice says: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"; and, in answer to Paul's "Who art thou, Lord?" continues: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." Paul then asks what he is to do, and "the Lord" says: "Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do."

Up to this point version two agrees very closely with version one, but now we are told nothing about the vision of Ananias nor of his having received any supernaturally given instructions, but only that Ananias restores Paul's sight and then makes a speech which differs entirely from the speech he is described in version one as making. And next we are told that Paul went into a trance, during which he had another conversation with "Him" (the Lord), telling Him of the difficulties he would have in

converting the Jews, and being told that he would be sent to the Gentiles.

According to the third account, the voice says: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks"; and, in answer to Paul's "Who art thou, Lord?", continues: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

In this account, be it noted, the direction to go to the Gentiles is given by the voice on the road to Damascus. In the first account Ananias was given instructions to deliver the message about the Gentiles. In the second account the order to go to the Gentiles is given when Paul goes into a trance some days after the "appearance" on the road to Damascus.

The discrepancies between these three accounts do not, of course, prove that Paul did not believe that he heard a voice, or even that he did not actually hear one; but they do prove that either Paul or the author or authors[1] of the three accounts were not meticulously accurate in their story-telling, and were prone to embroider. A man must be either regardless of accuracy or a romancer who on one occasion tells you that a voice gave utterance only to a very short command, and on another tells you that the same voice on the same occasion made a lengthy speech.

[1] Chapters xxii and xxvi of the Acts seem to have been written by a different hand from that which wrote chapter ix. The latter includes himself as one of "we," the former does not. Acts is probably a composite document, pieced together from two or more earlier works.

No one can lay claim to verbal exactitude who declares, when he first tells the story, that he was given a certain command while in a trance; and who avers, when he next relates the story, that he was given this command three days earlier, and under totally different conditions.

From this story thrice repeated, and each time differently, we learn that we cannot place entire reliance upon the accuracy of all the statements made and accounts given. Some of them may be correct, but we can have no certitude about it. We should not blame the authors, as we know from contemporary literature that inaccuracy of statement and embroidery of facts were failings of almost all historians of those days. Their aim was to tell a good story, not to obtain historical accuracy.

Even if, as is traditionally supposed, Luke wrote these accounts from his recollection of what Paul had told him, it is obvious that he was not a stickler for meticulous accuracy, was careless of details, and saw no harm in inventing speeches which he considered suitable to the occasion.

And if, as is now generally believed, it was not Luke who wrote the Acts, but some author or authors who lived about a hundred years later, it is certain that the tradition which he or they recorded was so vague that all detail was blurred.

But upon one point all these three accounts of Paul's conversion agree with each other, and with Paul's own doctrine in Corinthians, to which we shall shortly refer. The "appearance" was not that of a material body such as is described in the Gospel accounts of the appearances to the eleven disciples in Jerusalem. There is a light—seen, according to one version, only by St. Paul—and a voice—heard, according to another version, only by St. Paul; a voice which, according to all three accounts, is heard (by Paul's ears or by his conscience) asking why he persecutes Jesus.

To learn more about the nature of this appearance we

must turn to Paul's own words addressed to the Christians in Corinth.[1]

§ 14. *Paul's List of Appearances and His Resurrection Doctrine*

St. Paul's list of post-Resurrection appearances is: First, to Cephas; secondly, to the twelve; thirdly, to above five hundred brethren at once; fourthly, to James; fifthly, to all the apostles; and, sixthly, to Paul himself.

With the difficulty of reconciling this list with the Gospel accounts of the appearances of the risen Jesus we shall deal later. For the moment we must confine our attention to Paul's doctrine of the nature of these appearances to himself and others. That he regarded the appearance to himself as similar to the appearances to others is shown by his use of the same word, ὤφθη (translated in our authorized version "he was seen of"), throughout this list of appearances, which finishes with the words, "and last of all he was seen of me also."

We have just seen, however, that the appearance to Paul himself was merely a bright light and a voice, both of so vague or strange a character that it is doubtful whether his companions noticed them. So the tradition —"that which I also received"—known to Paul seems undoubtedly to have been that the other adherents of Jesus (Cephas, James, the apostles, and the others) had been vouchsafed some similar experience of the presence of their dead Lord. That tradition, it must be remembered, was not written down in our present Gospels until about seventy-five years had elapsed from the time when Paul wrote. How it had altered in that interval of time our study of the Gospel stories has already shown us.

Paul's theory about these appearances becomes quite

[1] 1 Corinthians xv. Van Manen, the great authority on Pauline literature, doubts the authenticity of any of it; but most authorities accept this as a genuine Pauline writing.

clear if we study this fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians.

In this chapter he is arguing against those who say that "there is no resurrection of the dead."[1]

He commences his argument by stating what he has heard—"that which I also received"—about the Resurrection of Christ, and then he enumerates all His appearances after the crucifixion, that to himself as well as those he has heard of.[2]

He then goes on to deal with those who find a difficulty in believing that the bodies which decay away in the earth can rise again. "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"[3] And he explains that the body which is raised is not "a natural body," but "a spiritual body"; a "celestial body," not a "terrestrial body."[4]

He admits that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption,"[5] and affirms that those who are still alive when the last trump sounds "will be changed in the twinkling of an eye."[6]

He appears to maintain[7] that men can be assured of their own future resurrections because Christ has been raised from the dead, "the first fruits of them that slept"; but at the same time he tells the Corinthians that it will be a spiritual body that will rise from the grave.

So Paul's idea of a resurrection was not that of a coming to life again of flesh and blood, and the appearances which he enumerates must have been considered by him not as a return of the human body of Jesus, but as a contact with the spirit of Christ, or as an appearance of Christ in a spiritual body—a vision or a ghost.

In the mind of Paul, or, indeed, of any theologian of that day, a "spiritual" body would not be so shadowy a phenomenon as that which men of to-day imagine as a

[1] 1 Corinthians xv, 12. [2] Verses 4–8. [3] Verse 35.
[4] Verses 40–4. [5] Verse 50. [6] Verses 51–2. [7] Verses 12–23.

ghost, but an angelic form—a species of body unknown to modern but familiar to ancient minds.[1]

However, it is unnecessary to discuss the exact meaning intended by Paul when he uses the words "spiritual body," as for our present purpose it is sufficient to note that he apparently did not believe that Christ appeared in the human body of Jesus after the death of the latter.

Neither is it necessary at present to criticize that part of Paul's argument which is based upon the assumption that death was introduced into the world by Adam, as we shall have to examine it later when we consider the doctrine of the future resurrection of the bodies of individual men.[2]

But we have yet to compare Paul's list of Resurrection appearances with those given in the Gospels, and to attempt to discover what original tradition lay behind all of them.

§ 15. *Paul's Catalogue of Appearances Compared with those of the Evangelists*

It is impossible to reconcile the list given by St. Paul[3] of the appearances of the risen Jesus with those given by the evangelists.

[1] In the Mithraic ritual there was a good deal about this mystic spiritual body which the Mithraists believed to be capable of leaving the more material body even during the latter's lifetime. This "perfect body" could, it was thought, visit the highest heaven and there be united with the Supreme; and this union was regarded as a re-birth or re-generation. (See Mead's "Quests Old and New," pp. 164-9.) The Christian Origen speaks of man's resurrection body in much the same way as the worshippers of Mithra did. It was, according to him, composed of a very subtle substance with no specialized organs, but wholly capable of sight, wholly capable of hearing, yet itself invisible and intangible. See 2 Corinthians xii for Paul's account of how he visited heaven—"whether in the body or out of the body" he could not tell—and heard "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Evidently Paul did not distinguish between objective and subjective experiences. Plotinus was, so his pupil Porphyry assures us, united with God on no less than four occasions; and many other ancient and oriental sages claimed that they had occasionally and for brief periods become one with the Soul of the Universe, the Supreme Reality, or the only God.

[2] See Chapter V.

[3] Corinthians xv, 5–8.

The first—to Cephas or Peter—may correspond with the appearance referred to, but not described, by Luke,[1] and the tradition about it may have originated in some now lost versions of the visits to the tomb.

The second—to the twelve—most probably corresponds with the appearances to the eleven described by all the evangelists.

The third—to "above five hundred brethren at once"—corresponds with nothing in any of the Gospels. It is inconceivable that the evangelists, when detailing every event connected with the appearances of their risen Master, should omit so important an episode as this, if they had ever heard of it; and that they should not have heard of it, if it ever occurred, is equally incredible. If this report of an appearance to five hundred is fiction, can we place any reliance upon Paul's reports of other appearances? Our faith in his evidence—his inspired evidence—is rudely shaken, and whether the counsel for the defence (the apologists) throw over this particular evidence or attempt to retain it, the result is the same. For it cannot be discarded as an interpolation without casting grave doubts upon the rest of the passage; and it cannot, it appears, be retained except on the theory that Paul, by the words "he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once," refers to the episode on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples were, according to the Acts, "filled with the Holy Ghost."[2]

This appears to be the usual theory set up by apologists to explain the appearance to the five hundred,[3] though on

[1] Luke xxiv, 34.

[2] Acts ii, 1–4.

[3] Dr. Gore ("Belief in God," p. 266) identifies this appearance with that recorded in Matthew (xxviii, 16–18), though the latter appearance is said to have been to the eleven disciples, and the larger number is plainly precluded by the context. The Bishop's argument is difficult if not impossible to follow. At one moment he appears to imply that the resurrection body of Jesus was His real body; at another, that His body was not a real body. "His spiritual body was material indeed, but it was one in which matter was wholly subservient to spiritual purpose, and no longer any impediment or restraint" (op. cit., p. 269). That sentence may have some

the day of Pentecost it was only "cloven tongues like as of fire" that appeared, and though they appeared only to the twelve. The multitude—which, indeed, might be five hundred strong—saw nothing, and only collected together, after the descent of the tongues of fire, to hear the disciples speak foreign languages,[1] or perhaps incomprehensible words such as were spoken in those days by those considered to be inspired.[2]

The fourth appearance—to James—corresponds with nothing in our Canonical Gospels, but is an episode which was described in the lost Gospel to the Hebrews. According to St. Jerome, who thence obtained his information, James the brother of Jesus swore at the last supper[3] that he would not eat again until after the Resurrection; and, after the Resurrection, Jesus appeared first to James—and this as early as the night following the day of the Crucifixion—at least twenty-four hours earlier than the time implied as that of the Resurrection in all the Canonical Gospels, on the first or second day instead of the third. Jesus is said to have taken bread and broken it and given it to James, telling him to eat it "because the Son of Man is risen from the dead." As, according to our canonical stories, the disciples did not expect, and could not at first credit, the Resurrection, the swearing of such an oath by James before the Resurrection took place is

meaning comprehensible to professors of casuistry, but it has none for men who use words in their ordinary sense; and it certainly does not appear to correspond with the fourth Article of Religion to which the Bishop subscribed: "Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again His body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature....."

[1] Acts ii, 5-13.

[2] The Fathers of the Church tell us how the speaking of words which had no apparent meaning for either the speakers or the listeners was regarded as a divine gift. The words were thought to contain the highest wisdom if only their meaning could be ascertained, and each listener attempted to interpret them according to his or her preconceived ideas of what revelation might be expected.

[3] According to our Canonical Gospels, this James was not even present on that occasion; James, the son of Zebedee, and James, the son of Alphaeus, being the only James's present.

quite inconsistent with them.[1] However, Paul's fourth appearance seems to refer to this event, unknown to the canonical evangelists, but recorded in this gospel which has disappeared.

The fifth appearance—to all the apostles—is impossible to identify with anything in the Gospels, unless for the word "apostles" we substitute the word "disciples," and take this appearance to be identical with number two.

The sixth—to Paul himself—long after the events recorded in the Gospels, we have already discussed.

§ 16. *The Oldest Tradition*

We have now studied and compared all these accounts of the appearances of Jesus after His death, and on the opposite page will be found a table showing these appearances as recorded by each of the authors who refer to them. The only task that remains is to discover, if possible, what were the facts or the tradition behind these conflicting accounts.

If this table be examined in conjunction with the detail of the stories given in the four Gospels, it will be apparent that there is considerable agreement about some of the appearances, in spite of the contradictions in points of detail, and that a rational explanation of both agreements and contradictions can easily be given. The orthodox doctrine that all the accounts are true cannot be maintained in face of contradictions so great that they cannot be reconciled; but the agreements are sufficiently striking to point to the probability of there having been one definite tradition, from which, in course of time, the different stories were evolved. Whether that tradition was true we will not for the moment consider. That it existed seems certain.

[1] The "apocryphal" gospels throw no light upon these events, but it is interesting to notice that the very late gospel according to Nicodemus follows the Galilean tradition as regards the appearance to the eleven disciples. That, according to Nicodemus, took place on Mount Olivet in Galilee, whereas the only other appearance he records is one in or near Jerusalem to Joseph of Arimathea.

	APPEARANCE AT THE TOMB	APPEARANCES AT PLACES OTHER THAN THE TOMB						
		FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	FOURTH	FIFTH	SIXTH	
Matthew		A To Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary"	B To the eleven					The appearance to the eleven is on a mountain in Galilee
(pseudo) Mark		A To Mary Magdalene	C To two disciples	B To the eleven				The first of these appearances might be at the tomb; the others are apparently near and in Jerusalem
Luke		C To Cleopas and another disciple	B To the eleven					On the road to Emmaus and in a room at Jerusalem
John	A To Mary Magdalene alone	B To ten of the disciples	B To the eleven	To seven disciples on the Sea of Tiberias				First appearances all in Jerusalem; last appearance (related in Appendix) in Galilee
Paul		To Peter	B To the twelve	To five hundred	To James	To all the apostles	To Paul himself	No times or places specified, so first appearance might be at tomb

The appearances marked B in the table seem all to refer to one event, though Matthew places that event in Galilee, while Mark, Luke, and John place it in a room in Jerusalem; though John divides it into two appearances eight days apart, and states that Thomas was absent in one of them; and though Paul loosely refers to the twelve instead of the eleven.[1]

The appearances marked A in the table seem to have originated in the story that Mary Magdalene, either by herself or accompanied by other women whose names are variously given, visited the tomb and found it empty. The original Mark and the author of Luke knew nothing of this appearance to Mary Magdalene; Matthew and the pseudo-Mark report it, but not as occurring at the tomb; Paul knows nothing about it; and John is the only author who actually states that it took place at the entrance to the tomb. So it appears very highly probable that this story of an appearance to Mary is an embroidery upon an original tradition about women visiting the tomb.

The appearances marked C in the table also seem to be of the same event, apparently known only to Luke, and taken from his story by the pseudo-Mark.

A, B, and C exhaust all the appearances mentioned by the evangelists, except those to the seven disciples on the Sea of Tiberias, which is recorded only by the author of the appendix to John.

It, therefore, appears highly probable that the original tradition was that Mary Magdalene, by herself or accompanied by some other women, visited the tomb and found it empty, and that at some later period the assembled disciples believed that they had actually seen Jesus in a spirit form.[2] Out of that original tradition all the Gospel stories might very easily have arisen in days when it was

[1] Judas, of course, being absent.

[2] It is quite possible that this was the story told by the original Mark, and that the new ending to Mark was provided because the old ending did not lend support to the new theories.

regarded as the business of the historian to improve upon facts. The contradictions would be natural if that was the whole of the tradition, as each evangelist would feel himself at liberty to fill in such details as appeared to him most suitable.

In Jerusalem the first development doubtless was that this appearance took place on the evening of the same day as that on which the tomb was found empty; that as the disciples sat eating their evening meal in a room in Jerusalem they saw Jesus in the room with them. When, later on, it was desired to teach that this appearance was not a mere vision, the stories about eating and about touching the Lord's body would be added, and John's story of two appearances would be evolved.

In Galilee, on the other hand, it would be said that the appearances took place in that country either on a mountain or on the Sea of Tiberias (Lake of Gennesaret).

Of this primitive tradition the story of the empty tomb would be the more vague part. According to Mark, who, it is generally believed, enshrines the oldest tradition, there were three women who saw a young man clothed in white, and were much alarmed by him. The young man announced that Jesus was risen, and the women fled, amazed and trembling, and said nothing about their experiences to anybody. So, according to the tradition in the oldest form in which we have it, the story of the discovery of the empty tomb was never told until ..... ? We are never told when; but we can guess that it was told after the story about the appearance to the eleven had got into circulation. Then the story of the women would be related, and become altered and embellished as it is in the accounts given by Matthew, Luke, and John. The appearance to the eleven would, of course, in those days, be regarded as the re-appearance of Jesus in the flesh; and His re-appearance in the flesh involved the evacuation of the tomb. The women, it would be thought, must have found the tomb empty; and that they actually did

find it empty must be definitely stated for the purpose of refuting those who disbelieved in the Resurrection.[1]

The earliest tradition of all was probably to the effect that Jesus had been seen again, after His death and burial, by the eleven disciples, by them only, and by them when they were gathered together at supper in a state of mental disturbance which may well be imagined,[2] even though it is not described. No other living soul was said to have seen Him, and even these disciples—according to this hypothetical reconstruction of the tradition—never saw Him again.

For according to all the accounts in the New Testament, as well as according to our hypothesis, nothing is known of the whereabouts of Jesus before and after the appearances. We are not told what happens to Him in the intervals between them. He arrives we are not told whence, and departs or disappears we are not told whither, after each appearance to Mary, to the two disciples, and to the eleven. If the appearances were visions—hallucinations of some kind or other—this is comprehensible; but a living person does not disappear entirely between a few disconnected and sudden appearances to his friends. It should be noticed that—except in the case of the appearance to himself which we have already discussed[3]—Paul says nothing of any acts or sayings of the risen Christ. He merely catalogues the five appearances previous to that which was vouchsafed to himself. It is only in the later Gospels that we hear of these acts and sayings; and in the earliest of these it appears that there was nothing to show that the Jesus who was seen was a resuscitated

[1] See Kirsopp Lake's "Resurrection of Jesus Christ," chapters vi and vii, for a much fuller discussion of the earliest tradition and the actual facts upon which it might have been founded, and for another but somewhat similar conclusion about it.

[2] If we think of the re-action after the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the trial and crucifixion, and the apparent final destruction of all their hopes and ambitions.

[3] The voice and the light unaccompanied by any body.

corpse rather than a phantom or a vision conjured up by excited brains.

The only difficulty in accepting this hypothesis about the earliest tradition is the unlikelihood of Paul's mentioning no less than six appearances, though he wrote earlier than any of the evangelists.

But, as we have already seen, Paul uses the phrase "he was seen by" to denote some spiritual experience such as his own,[1] whereas the evangelists are concerned with what they regard as bodily appearances. Bearing this in mind, the appearance to Peter may be connected with Peter's visit to the tomb; the appearance to the twelve may correspond with the appearance to the eleven; the appearance to the five hundred may correspond to the Pentecost—the gift of tongues given by the Spirit to a large number of disciples—and the other appearances may be episodes of a like nature. To Paul, it seems, all these appearances were—as the traditional appearance probably was[2]—subjective phenomena of a spiritual nature, and not objective physical manifestations.

That the original tradition was of an appearance or appearances of this nature seems all the more probable when we consider the otherwise strange fact that neither Paul nor any of the evangelists, except Luke, give any explanation or mention of the final disappearance of Jesus. If, as His memory faded from the minds of His disciples,

[1] The account (Acts vii, 54-60) of the stoning of Stephen may throw some light upon the Pauline ideas about the appearances of Jesus. On this occasion Jesus is not said to have been in the flesh or upon the earth, but Stephen is said to have seen Him "standing on the right hand of God," and Paul—traditionally the informant of Luke, the author of the Acts—was looking on at the stoning. Here, once more, an undoubtedly subjective experience—a vision formed in the mind—is spoken of as if it had objective reality, and as if Jesus in his human body had been actually seen "standing on the right hand of God"—also presumably in some more or less human form.

[2] If, as is suggested above, the only appearance recorded by the original Mark was one to the disciples as they sat in a room with closed doors, that Gospel—admittedly the oldest of the Gospels—would end without any mention of a bodily resurrection, as it begins without any mention of a Virgin Birth. It would be the story of a man who was embued with the good Spirit, but who died like all other men.

His appearances ceased, this is comprehensible; but if He lived on earth in bodily form it is indeed strange to be told nothing of how He eventually did leave the earth. Luke the evangelist, who, above all others, emphasized the bodily nature of the Resurrection, apparently recognized this and provided an account of the Ascension. The Gnostics who asserted that Christ was a spirit who temporarily inhabited the man Jesus and left Him when He died, and the other Gnostics who asserted that Christ throughout His life was a phantom, were thus confronted by a much more popular story which flatly contradicted their doctrines.

Whether the tradition of Jesus's appearances—of any nature whatever—arose immediately after the death of a religious leader, or whether the tradition arose in some other way and at some other time, we need not now discuss. It suffices for our present purpose to understand how such a tradition, however arising, might very easily grow into the Resurrection stories and doctrine as we now know them.

A rumour, originating in a dream or in a hope or in some other way,[1] would, in that fertile soil for the miraculous, soon grow into a tradition with embellishments added by its first chroniclers. That tradition, with its details still vague and undefined, might well be recorded in the various forms found in the stories related in the four Gospels. Such a course of events would be natural; such a process is very possible. What is impossible is that four such different accounts of the same event should all be true. What is unlikely is that any one of them is

[1] Many of us can recollect modern stories of so and so being seen by a friend on his own door step, or in his old familiar place at his club, within a few hours or a day or two after his death. Imagination plays strange tricks on us at times. In certain moods, too, people sometimes feel near them the presence of a beloved but absent or dead friend. If they mention to others this feeling, they will doubtless soon hear it said by yet others that they have heard that a ghost has been seen. Tales will have been started, and out of the original hallucinations will have been evolved a detailed story of a house or of a person haunted by a spirit.

altogether true. That the Gospel stories as we now read them originated in such a tradition or legend has been recognized for a long time by students of ancient literature accustomed to the methods of ancient writers and to reading the legends of the old world.

We shall see later[1] how the orthodox apologists attempt to substitute allegories and metaphors for what was originally recorded as historical fact; but this is how these stories struck one who was essentially a religious man as well as a great authority on all literature:—

> And the more the miraculousness of the story deepens, as after the death of Jesus, the more does the texture of the incidents become loose and floating, the more does the very air and aspect of things seem to tell us we are in wonderland. Jesus after his Resurrection not known by Mary Magdalene, taken by her for the gardener; appearing *in another form*, and not known by the two disciples going with him to Emmaus, and at supper with Him there; not known by His most intimate apostles on the borders of the Sea of Galilee; and presently, out of these vague beginnings, the recognitions getting asserted, then the ocular demonstrations, the final commissions, the ascension;—one hardly knows which of the two to call the most evident here, the perfect simplicity and good faith of the narrators or the plainness with which they themselves say to us: "*Behold a legend growing under your eyes.*"[2]

If we read such stories in the scriptures of any other religion, we would unhesitatingly say that here was an example of the growth of a legend, or that here was a myth, and we would refuse to accept such evidence as proof of an event so miraculous and so opposed to all experience. If a reported event is not an improbable one, discrepancies in the evidence for its occurrence are not necessarily of very great importance; but when the event is one which is contrary to the course of nature, as we ourselves and all historians have always known it, it requires very strong and uncontradictory evidence to convince us that it happened.

[1] See Chapter VI.
[2] Matthew Arnold, "Literature and Dogma," chap. v.

In the evidence before us, much edited though it has been, contradictions of the utmost importance remain—contradictions suspiciously like those with which we meet when any unusual event is said to have occurred, and people first say that, though they were almost on the spot, they were too late to see it, and next that they were actually on the spot but didn't clearly see it, and later on still that they actually witnessed the event.

Moreover, with the exception of Paul, who claims to have heard a voice and seen a great light, none of the authors of the books of our New Testament state that they themselves saw the events. The traditional Matthew and John would, it is true, be included in the category of the eleven disciples; but the authors of Matthew and John do not write in the first person as eye-witnesses; and we know that these authors, like the authors of Mark and of Luke who would not be so included, could not have even been born when the events they relate are supposed to have taken place. So the evidence, such as it is, is not even first-hand. It is evidence not of an event, but of a tradition.

That events of this kind were often said to have occurred, and that legends of this sort could, and often did, grow up in those ancient days, we learn from a study of the numerous other stories of resurrection from the dead, to some of which we must now turn our attention.

Chapter II

OTHER STORIES OF RESURRECTIONS

If but one resurrection story had ever been credited, we might believe that some exceptionally good evidence for its occurrence had been required and received before men accepted as true a report of so miraculous an event. But when we find that men in ancient days were all ready to believe that resurrections had occurred on several occasions in the past, and were still occasionally occurring in their own days, we begin to realize that they did not require any very definite proofs of such events. We notice, when we study mythology, comparative religion, and ecclesiastical and secular history, that such events were very frequently reported in the days when men did not make any attempt to sift evidence, but have never been reported and believed since the time when the growing spirit of scientific inquiry began to cause men to ask for definite and accurate details of unusual occurrences.

Now we would inquire, on being told such a story, how long the person had been dead, whether death was undoubted and it was not a trance or a fainting fit or some similar cataleptic state which had given an appearance of death, whether signs of corruption had been observed, and whether the person or persons who reported the death was or were qualified to distinguish death from a mere temporary suspension of animation. We would require unimpeachable evidence of the fact of death, because we know that many men have been reported dead and have subsequently returned safe and sound to their friends. Men reported to have been drowned in a shipwreck have been picked up and saved; men left upon battlefields for dead have recovered from their wounds

and been restored to their relations; men have been placed in their coffins when they were not really dead, and so frequent an event is this supposed to be by the timid that men often make careful provision in their wills against premature burial.

And then, if satisfied that death had really occurred, we would further require irrefutable evidence that the person of whom the story was told had really been seen alive after his death, and that it was not only a vision or a dream or a mere rumour which had given rise to the story. We would inquire whether it was an actual material body which had been seen, and not some phantasm or illusion such as men call a ghost or a spirit. For we have most of us heard stories of men being seen in their old haunts on the very day that they died or a few days later. A well-known admiral was some years ago, as many of us can recollect, said to have been seen walking up a London staircase to a room, where his wife happened to be giving a ball, on the very day when his ship was sunk and he himself was drowned in the Mediterranean. Hundreds of such cases of illusion might be quoted, as men and women are apt to imagine they see old familiar sights, are apt to confuse dates, and are very apt to mistake what they are told by other people and to repeat what they have never really heard said.

And as upon these points we would now, before we believed such stories, require the first-hand evidence of reliable witnesses, we no longer hear new stories, such as were common in former days, of men and women being raised from the dead.[1]

[1] As an example of an event which, in olden times, would have doubtless originated a resurrection story, the following item of news, culled from an English newspaper in 1923, may be of interest:—

"Delhi, Feb. 9th.

"A remarkable authenticated story from Burma records the dramatic return to life of a young Burmese girl. After giving birth to a healthy baby she was pronounced dead by her semi-skilled attendants. The funeral ceremonies were begun, and for three days the body, decked with flowers, lay in state on a bed in the street, and was visited by friends and acquaintances, to whom the customary hospitality was proffered. On the

But in the past the fact that many people believed that such a miracle had taken place could not have involved the fact that it had actually done so, as people believed in a very large number of such occurrences which certainly never took place. Long before the Christian era stories of resurrections were so common that their number became a subject for jokes among the Greeks. Aristophanes, in "The Frogs" (written about 405 B.C.), makes Dionysos say of Hermes and of the father of Hermes that performing resurrections was the family profession. And, at the time when Christianity arose, the contemporary religions and the current mythologies all had stories of a god or of a human being who had been raised from the dead; and some religions like our own had stories of several such occurrences.

Elijah raised to life again a child who had died;[1] and Elisha in a similar manner, by lying on a dead child, restored it to life.[2] A dead man who was hastily lowered into the sepulchre of Elisha came to life again as soon as his body touched the bones of the dead prophet.[3]

That Jesus should raise people from the dead was apparently regarded by the evangelists as so small a matter that one of His miracles of this kind was recorded only by John. The raising of Lazarus from the dead by Jesus is described at length by John;[4] and he further informs us that this miracle created a great stir in Palestine,[5] yet not one of the other evangelists even

third day a woman friend declared that the body was warmer, and this proved to be the case. Curry powder was vigorously applied externally, and the girl was brought back from what was apparently death, but was really catalepsy."

[1] 1 Kings xvii, 17–23.
[2] 2 Kings iv, 18–37.
[3] 2 Kings xiii, 20–1.
[4] John xi, 1–46.
[5] John xii, 9 and 17–18. (Lazarus was said by a late tradition to have lived for another thirty years after his restoration from the grave, and to have resided, together with Mary Magdalene and other named persons, in the South of France. The origin of this and similar medieval stories was probably the names of churches and villages called after Gospel personages, legends arising to account for the names by some actual personal connection with this district. Unless it is stated that the resurrection is followed by an ascension, legends are likely to arise about the remainder of the raised person's life on earth.)

mentions it. John, on the other hand, makes no mention whatever of the raising to life again of Jairus's dead daughter—a miracle recorded by all the other evangelists, and one at which John himself (the traditional author of the Gospel) is said to have been present.[1] And Luke alone mentions the fact that Jesus raised from the dead the son of the widow at Nain,[2] though the fame of this miracle was also, as might be expected, spread "throughout all Judea and throughout all the region round about."[3]

So either the evangelists did not consider all miracles of raising people from the dead worthy of record, or they never heard of some of these events whose fame created such a stir in the country! (Unless, perchance, they never really occurred, and are only legendary events attributed, long after His death, to the founder of the evangelist's religion.)

That Luke, in particular, should not make any mention of the raising of Lazarus is very peculiar, as he tells us the story about Mary and Martha,[4] the sisters of Lazarus, and as he does seem to look upon resurrections from the dead as worthy of record. He tells us of the raising of this widow's son at Nain, which all the other evangelists forget to mention; and he also tells us how Peter raised from the dead the needlewoman named Tabitha or Dorcas, who lived at Joppa.[5] On the other hand, however, neither he nor two other evangelists—Mark and John—make any mention of the general resurrection of dead saints which is recorded by Matthew. According to the author of our first gospel,[6] many of the saints arose from their graves after the resurrection of Jesus, "and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."[7] It might

[1] Mark v, 37. [2] Luke vii, 11–15. [3] Luke vii, 16–17.
[4] Luke x, 38–42. [5] Acts ix, 36–42. [6] Matthew xxvii, 52–3.
[7] It is stated that the graves of these saints were opened at the moment when Jesus died on the cross, and the words "after His resurrection" seem to be an afterthought, since the text as it now stands implies that, though the graves were opened on the Friday, the dead did not leave them until the Sunday morning. The passage is generally taken as meaning that the saints actually came to life again at the moment of Jesus's death.

reasonably be expected that an event of this kind—the resurrection of a great number of persons, many of whom, since they were "the saints," would presumably be well known, who appeared in public in the streets of Jerusalem immediately after their resuscitation—would give rise to a good deal of talk and excitement. Yet Matthew alone of all the authors of our New Testament books considers the event worthy of mention; no secular historian makes any reference to it whatever, and apparently it had no effect upon the beliefs of most of the inhabitants of the holy city.[1]

So we find that in our own scriptures many resurrections from the dead are recorded, and that such events seem to be regarded as of so little importance that those who must have known of them (if they occurred) omit to mention them, and those who mention them do so comparatively casually.

Moreover, according to the authors of the Synoptic Gospels, a resurrection from the dead was regarded as so probable an event that Herod thought, or heard that others thought, that Jesus was John the Baptist come to life again after his head had been cut off.[2] Other Jews, we are told, thought that Jesus was Elijah come to life again, or perhaps a reincarnation of Elijah or of one of the other prophets.[3]

But long before even the Old Testament books were written stories of resurrections were told in the East. That gods die[4] and rise again was an idea as old as sun-worship.

[1] This miracle was, it appears, repeated nearly 1,100 years later. For William of Tyre states that when the Crusaders captured Jerusalem the dead rose from their tombs and appeared to many persons in the streets of the holy city. Among others, he tells us, Adhémar, the Bishop of Puy, rose from the dead on this occasion. (See note 6, p. 42, "Légendes Pieuses du Moyen Age," by Maury, who cites Guizot's collection.)

[2] Matthew xiv, 2; Mark vi, 16.

[3] Luke ix, 7.

[4] The idea of an eternal god is not primitive. Even recently primitive tribes (e.g., North American Indians) have been found who could not conceive that the Creator of the earth of whom the Christian missionaries

The worshippers of the sun saw their god apparently descend into Hell[1] every evening and rise again from the dead on each succeeding morning; and the worshippers of other gods could claim no less for their own deities than one death and a subsequent resurrection. In those remote days, when most civilized men worshipped the celestial bodies, the sun's annual recommencement of life —return journey—on or about the 25th of December, was celebrated as his resurrection, and the moon was regarded as being born again every month on the third day after the old moon had died and disappeared.

Osiris, the first member of the principal Egyptian Trinity and perhaps the earliest of all the gods with whose history we are still acquainted, inherited the attributes of the more primitive god, the sun itself, and is therefore often spoken of as a sun-god. But when we first hear of him it is as a man-god who had lived on earth, suffered, died, risen from the dead, and eventually become judge of men when they arrived in another world.[2]

The sufferings and death of Osiris were enacted in various "mystery" plays of which accounts have come to us through Greek and Roman authors. To celebrate the anniversary of his death his worshippers used, at the vernal equinox,[3] to erect a pillar in the form of a cross (but with more than one cross-bar), in front of which they bewailed the sufferings of the god. Three days later they

spoke could still be alive. The creating spirit, according to them, must have died long ago, and been succeeded by other spirits. Even the great Jupiter himself was said to have died, and at one time his tomb used to be pointed out in Crete.

[1] For Hell was the region below the world.

[2] In some religions the functions of raising the dead and of judging the dead are performed by the same persons. Saoshyas, the prophet of the Parsees, is to awaken the dead on the last day and to judge the good and evil which they have done on earth. "To judge the quick and the dead" was, long before the Christian creeds were written, regarded as one of the eventual duties of the gods who had lived on earth and had gone to heaven. Osiris seems to have the attributes of a corn-god as well as of a sun-god. See Frazer's "Adonis, Attis, Osiris," pp. 261–3, for account of pictorial representation, in the great temple of Philæ, of the resurrection of Osiris.

[3] Approximately Easter.

celebrated his resurrection. At this ceremony the priests of Osiris feigned to have lost all trace of the god's body, and then, at the correct moment of the resurrection, to find it again.[1] With great rejoicings they hailed the resurrection of their man-god, the first of all mankind to rise from the dead—the Saviour who, by his resurrection, had brought the gift of immortality to man.[2]

The myth upon which these ceremonies were founded, or which maybe was originally itself founded on the ceremonies, was related in very many different ways. According to one version, Osiris, after being cut in pieces by Set[3] and his fellow conspirators, was joined together

[1] A ceremony closely corresponding with this used to be performed on every Easter Eve in some of the Christian churches in Russia. In Moscow the priests processed round the Cathedral, which was absolutely dark save for a dim light at each corner of a bier, seeking for the body of Jesus which had disappeared from the tomb, and occasionally reporting to the Metropolitan that they had failed to find it. On the stroke of midnight (Easter morning) all the thousands of candles fixed on the walls of the Cathedral were suddenly and simultaneously lit (by means of a fine thread of gun-cotton which connected all their wicks with each other), the clergy burst into song, "The Lord is Risen," and a painted picture of Christ was raised before the eyes of the congregation. This ceremony still took place up to the time of the Russian Revolution, but has probably now ceased. It appears, though more elaborate, to be identical in idea with the ceremonies performed in Egypt, 2,000 years ago and more, by the priests of Osiris. The empty coffin of Jesus was exhibited at Moscow, just as the empty tomb of Osiris used to be shown at Alexandria. In medieval times the discovery of the empty tomb and the search for the body of Jesus were dramatically represented in many Christian churches; and at the present day, amid the wildest emotional excitement, the "Holy Fire from Heaven" is used to light almost simultaneously, on the stroke of midnight on Easter Eve, hundreds or thousands of lights in the orthodox Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

[2] Engraved on the walls of the Pyramids built by the Fifth and Sixth Egyptian dynasties (2750–2475 B.C.) are to be found texts referring to Osiris as the first who rose from the dead. Eternal life is promised to the soul of every faithful worshipper, for "as Osiris lives, so shall he also live; as Osiris died not, so shall he also not die; as Osiris perished not, so shall he also not perish." (See Breasted's "History of Egypt," p. 66.) Compare these mortuary texts with the Pauline doctrine. The very phraseology of 1 Corinthians xv is reminiscent of the two-thousand-five hundred-year-older texts. But instead of Osiris it is Christ who is now said to have been the first to rise.

[3] Set, Seth, or Typhon, was both the Devil and the brother of Osiris. According to another version of the story, Set, by a trick, induced Osiris to lie down in a coffin which was immediately nailed down and flung into the Nile. Long afterwards, when Isis had rescued the coffin from the coast of Syria, whither it had drifted, Set seized the body and cut it into fourteen pieces, which Isis sought for, found in different parts of Egypt, and buried

again by his sister-wife, Isis,[1] and thus returned to life. Isis had learnt the proper magic formula for this purpose from Thoth,[2] and brought Osiris to life again, so that by him she might conceive Horus. Afterwards, by the use of the same or some other magic words, she brought to life again her son Horus, who had been stung to death by a scorpion.

Dionysos was also restored to life or reborn after being killed, and after having descended into Hell. According to the Cretan version of the story, Zagreus, the son of Zeus, was torn to pieces by Titans, and subsequently came to life again as Dionysos. Dionysos, like Zagreus, lived, though he was the son of God and a god himself, as a mortal man upon the earth.

The detail about the god's body being torn in pieces, and subsequently joined together again or re-born whole, appears only in the most primitive form of these myths. In the less primitive the sufferings of the god, his death, and his resurrection are described, but he is not said to be rent asunder. In the Eleusinian rites, the Greek mystery plays which were annually acted at the time when Christianity arose, and for several hundred years before that era, these events in the life of Dionysos, and also his miraculous birth, were dramatically represented.

Adonis, the god who had been worshipped in Syria for hundreds of years before the birth of Christianity, and who was still worshipped there when Christianity arose, also rose from the dead. At the ceremonies which were annually held in his honour at Byblus[3] and many other

one by one. Only one portion of the body was never found, and of this she made an image which was worshipped in Egypt for hundreds or thousands of years. In this version there is no mention of a resurrection. For various versions of the stories about Osiris see Frazer, "The Golden Bough" (second edition), vol. ii, chapter iii, § 6; and "Adonis, Attis, Osiris," book iii, chapter i.

[1] The principal Egyptian Trinity is composed of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.

[2] Thoth corresponds to Mercury, and to the Logos or Word of the Gnostics, and of the author of the Gospel according to St. John.

[3] In Phœnicia.

places his resurrection from the dead was always represented as occurring on the day succeeding his death. As his name Adonis = Adon = Lord, the cry "The Lord is risen" was shouted by thousands of his worshippers when the scene of his resurrection was enacted in the dramatic rites.[1]

The resurrection of the Phrygian virgin-born god, Attis, was celebrated by his worshippers every 25th of March. On the first day of the festivals held in his honour an effigy of the god was bound to a tree or to a pole set up to represent a tree; and on the third day, amid great lamentations, the god's death was represented and his effigy burnt.[2] On the fourth day of the festival the resurrection of the god was celebrated with great rejoicings.

The stories told about Adonis and about Attis have many points of similarity. The first persons to greet the risen gods were women; and women seem to have been conspicuous among the worshippers who lamented their deaths.

The stories told about these last three gods—Dionysos, Adonis, and Attis—probably originated in allegories about the death and decay of vegetation in the autumn and its

[1] The inhabitants of Syria belonged to another branch of the Semitic stock from which the Jews had also sprung; hence the similarity of their languages. Adonis was probably identical with the Old Testament Baal.

[2] It appears that in the older forms of the festival a high priest acted the part of Attis during the first part of the rites, and that an effigy of a young man was substituted for him during the latter part of the time spent on the tree, and in the funeral ceremony. It is probable that in still older —prehistoric—times the High Priest was himself actually sacrificed. For examples of priests and kings being sacrificed as scape-goats for their people see "The Golden Bough." Sir James Frazer has collected a large number of well-authenticated examples of this exceedingly strange custom, and shows how, as the kings and priests obtained more permanent power, they substituted for their own compulsory self-sacrifice, first the sacrifice of another person, and eventually the mock sacrifice of an effigy. For a description of the sacraments, baptisms, and ritual of remission of sins, which took place at the festivals held in honour of the resurrection of Attis, on the site of the present St. Peter's Church at Rome, see Frazer's "Adonis, Attis, Osiris," pp. 170-3. The worship of Attis and of Cybele was introduced in Rome in the year 204 B.C., and for more than 500 years after that date the Hilaria—the festival of the god's resurrection—continued to be celebrated in that city.

subsequent resurrection or revivification in the spring; but in the first millennium B.C. the original allegorical meaning of the rites had been forgotten by most men, if not indeed by all men, and the worshippers of these deities believed that they were celebrating the anniversaries of historical events in the lives of their respective man-gods. The anthropomorphic myths which had been evolved from spring festivals[1] were regarded as true stories.[2] Tammuz, the Babylonian (and consequently another Semitic) man-god, who also was said to have risen from the dead, was doubtless another divine human who originated as a corn-god. He too had dramas acted in his honour.[3] Hyacinth, one of the minor Greek gods, also had his resurrection from the dead celebrated by annual rites.[4] And that the Greek goddess Proserpine thus originated seems certain, as, according to the story about her, she spent, after her original resurrection from Hades, half the year upon the earth and the other half with her husband, Pluto, the king of the nether regions;[5]

[1] In the original festivals "sympathetic magic" was practised for the purpose of ensuring good crops in the coming season.

[2] Possibly the "initiates" may in some cases have had a hazy suspicion of the connection between the god and vegetation; but none of the accounts which have come down to us through classical authors bear any evidence that so rational an idea was formed by any of the worshippers of these gods. And even if the learned did recognize the origin of their myths, they would probably remain silent, as, in the competition of religions for popular favour, an avowed allegory would have stood no chance of success against the story of a man-god who had suffered and died for mankind and subsequently risen again from the dead. The learned were mostly priests whose interests were bound up with the cult of their god, and who were therefore, like every other priesthood, unwilling to confess the truth even when they knew it. These remarks apply only to the worshippers themselves. The sceptical Greek and Roman historians and philosophers did, of course, discuss the probable allegorical origin of all these myths.

[3] In Ezekiel (viii, 14) we have a reference to the Israelite women bewailing the dead Tammuz before his resurrection is celebrated. The "prophets" were continually rebuking the Israelites for erring after strange gods, and from this text and other sources we know that these foreign gods included at least one of the ancient pre-Christian gods who had died for humanity and been raised again from the dead.

[4] See Frazer's "Adonis, Attis, Osiris," chapter vii.

[5] In one form of the Adonis myth Zeus decrees that after his death he should spend half the year in Heaven with Aphrodite and the other half of the year in Hell with Persephone.

just as vegetation lies "dead" underground from autumn to spring and then comes to life again for the remainder of the year.[1]

For the ancient belief was that the fruit or seed died in the earth, and then, by some miraculous process, came to life again in spring time—that season of green growth which arrives even more suddenly and conspicuously in the East than in the West. St. Paul, in his argument about the resurrection of men's bodies, says, evidently thinking of this process: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die."[2] His analogy is founded upon a misapprehension, but to his auditors it must have appeared striking. Proserpine, like the other deities whose myths we have considered, also had her death and resurrection celebrated by annual rites; so wherever we look in Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, and Babylonia we find that, at the time when Christianity arose, men and women worshipped a god who had lived on earth, died, and been raised from the dead.[3]

In Persia, too, we find worshipped a god who had lived on earth, died, and risen from the dead. Mithra, the Persian god, however, probably did not originate as a vegetation-god. He, like Osiris, whom we have already

[1] Various festivals which originate from the ancient rites celebrating the resurrection of the god (the corn-god or spirit of vegetation anthropomorphized) in spring-time are still held throughout Europe to-day. The old English May Queen ceremonies are the degenerate vestiges of such a festival; but in less sophisticated eastern districts of Europe the spring-time carnivals usually retain much clearer traces of the original festivals in honour of the Spirit of Vegetation, and even of the death and resurrection dramas which once formed the most important part of those festivals. Even in central Europe the ceremony of carrying Death out of the village and of bringing in Summer in its stead is annually enacted at the present time in many places, and the details of the ceremony show its close connection with a belief in a dying person who comes to life again in the revivifying vegetation. (See Frazer's "Golden Bough" for examples.)

[2] 1 Corinthians, xv, 36.

[3] Adonis, Attis, Dionysos, and Tammuz were each known as "the Saviour," probably because their resurrection from the dead had originally symbolized the re-growth of the crops upon which mankind depends for life. As risen gods they each seem to have been known as "the Third One," the rising being the third stage or "the third day" in the cycle of living, dying, and rising from the dead.

discussed, probably inherited the attributes of a sun-god. After his death he was buried in a rock-tomb, and subsequently rose again amid the rejoicings of his followers.[1]

These gods—Osiris, Dionysos, Adonis, Attis, and Mithra—were the principal deities worshipped at the time when, and in the part of the world where, Christianity first arose. But they were not the only persons who were said to have been raised from the dead. Other gods, some kings, and a few more ordinary mortals, were also believed to have come to life again after dying, or to have been translated from the Hell where dead men dwelt to the Heaven in which the gods resided, thus becoming deified.[2]

Memnon was, at the bidding of Zeus, taken by his mother Eos from Hades to Olympus. Marduk, the Babylonian god and son of the supreme god Ea, was said to have lived on earth, and eventually to have returned to Heaven as mediator between man and God. He was called Lord of Lords, and King of Kings.

Æsculapius, as befits the god of healing and the father of medicine, was said to have raised from the dead a large number of persons. At the Epidauria, the ceremonies held on the last day of the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries, his raising of Iacchus, the son of Persephone, was dramatically represented. He was also said to have raised from the dead Capaneus, Lycurgus, Hippolytus, Tyndareus, Hymenæus, Glaucus, and others.[3]

[1] The burial and the resurrection of Mithra had been celebrated for hundreds of years before the Christian era by his worshippers, who partook of a sacrament of bread and water, said to have been instituted by their Lord and Saviour, Mithra—the mediator between God and man. The Zoroastrians have a very old tradition that in time to come Ormuzd, the good god, will completely overthrow Ahriman, the wicked god; and that then a virgin will give birth to a Messiah—the second Zoroaster—who will raise all the dead to life again, beginning with the first man, Gayomart. Originating in Persia, this tradition still survives in India.

[2] It is worth noticing that many passages in the Epistles imply, and that some early Christian sects believed, that Jesus became God by the act of resurrection, and not by birth as God's son.

[3] Apollodorus, "The Library," book iii, x, 3. See vol. ii of Frazer's translation.

Pausanias, the celebrated Greek author, relates that at Epidaurus, in a temple dedicated to Æsculapius, there was a memorial to Hippolytus, who had been raised from the dead; and numerous other ancient writers bear witness to a widespread belief in these stories.

According to Plato,[1] "Er, son of Armenius," who had been killed in battle ten days before, rose from his funeral pyre and described his experiences after death. The story —perhaps a peg upon which to hang an eschatological discourse[2]—is cast in the form of history, not of fiction, and was doubtless accepted as fact, the distinction between fact, fiction, and allegory being not so nicely drawn as in the present day. And, even as at the present time the events related in works of fiction are intended to resemble those which occur in real life, so the stories then told were meant to resemble actual events, and only to readers who believed in occasional resurrections from the dead would such a tale have been told to illustrate a theory.

In Greek mythology—that combination of history and scripture which all Greeks believed until the scepticism of the later philosophers spread among the race—we read, too, of the resurrection of Glaucus, son of King Minos of Crete. Glaucus, while yet a child, fell into a honey-pot and was drowned. Eventually a diviner named Polyidus, having seen a serpent restore another serpent to life by placing a certain herb on its body, applied this same herb to the body of the child and brought him back to life again.[3]

In a Tongan tradition of much the same kind, the dead boy is brought to life by being covered with the leaves of a certain tree.[4]

[1] "Republic," book x.

[2] About disembodied spirits choosing the nature of their next lives, and, having chosen, being allotted them by the Fates—the three daughters of Necessity; and about kindred matters.

[3] Apollodorus, book i, iii, 3.

[4] Frazer (op. cit.), citing Père Reiter's "Traditions Tonguiennes."

A Lydian demi-god, Tylon, was said to have died of a snake bite: his sister Moire induced the giant Damasen to slay the serpent who had done the deed. But the serpent's mate brought a flower—"the flower of Zeus"—and pressed it to the lips of the dead snake, which immediately came to life again. So Moire used the same plant to bring her brother back to life. The figures of Tylon, of the giant, of the snake, and of the revivifying plant can be still seen on old coins from the city of Sardes.[1]

This is a favourite theme all over the world. There are hundreds of tales to be found in folk-lore of men who have seen a snake killed and another snake fetch some magic herb with which it restored its friend to life. This magic herb, being stolen by the man from the snake, is found equally efficacious in restoring human beings to life. Even if the human being has had his head cut off or has lost some of his limbs, a touch of the magic herb suffices to make the pieces of his body join together again, usually so well as to leave no mark of their former severance.

In a less common yet frequent form of the story it is birds and not snakes who thus inadvertently show a man where to procure such a magic herb. In an old Jewish Midrash a man, who had obtained a herb of this kind from a bird, took it away from him with the intention of bringing men to life again; but as he walked homewards he passed the dead body of a lion, and, wishing to make a trial of the herb, he laid it on the dead beast's mouth. The herb had lost none of its virtue; the lion was immediately restored to life; but in its ignorance or its hungry ingratitude it sprang on its benefactor and devoured him, together with the herb.[2]

[1] Frazer, "Adonis, Attis, Osiris," pp. 98–9.

[2] Compare the story in Apuleius's "Golden Ass," book ii, chapter ii, about a murdered man who is raised to life again by the incantations of an Egyptian "prophet," who lays a herb three times upon the mouth of the corpse.

One of the favourite tragic stories of the Greeks was about the love of the widow Laodamia for her husband Protesilaus, who had been the first Greek to land on the Asiatic coast for the siege of Troy and the first to be killed. She made an image of her husband and kept it always with her, and her grief was so great that the gods granted her prayer that Protesilaus should be allowed to return to her, if only for three hours, from Hades. Hermes brought the dead hero back to earth, but he was permitted to remain alive for only a short time, and when the hour came for his return Laodamia stabbed herself to death in his arms. Protesilaus was buried at Eleus and worshipped as a god.[1]

Hercules, with the help of Persephone, was said to have restored Alcestis to life again and to the arms of her husband Admetus, for whom she had willingly died.[2]

It was related[3] of the poet Aristeas, who lived early in the sixth century B.C., that upon one occasion he fell down dead in a shop. The shopkeeper closed his shop and went to fetch the relatives of the poet; but on their way back they met a man who declared that Aristeas could not be dead, as he had just seen and spoken to him. When they arrived at the shop no trace of Aristeas, either alive or dead, could be found, and nothing more was heard of him until he re-appeared seven years later.

He then wrote a poem, disappeared a second time, and subsequently re-appeared again at a place called Metapontum (the modern Basiento), where he ordered the Metapontines to erect statues of himself and of Apollo side by side. Having given these orders, which later on were carried out by the Metapontines, he finally vanished.

In this story Herodotus appears to convey a hint that

[1] See Frazer's "Apollodorus," epitome iii, 30 and notes, for list of classic authors who relate this tale.

[2] See Chapter III for names of others rescued from Hell by Hercules.

[3] By Herodotus, iv, 14–15.

the death was feigned, and that Aristeas disappeared and re-appeared so as to create the legend of a resurrection. Empedocles, to whom we shall refer later,[1] and other personages were suspected of playing the same trick; but men must have been extremely ready to believe stories of resurrections from the dead if others deliberately plotted or were believed to plot such deceptions.

Herodotus relates another story of a similar kind,[2] which bears witness to the belief of another race in a resurrection from the dead and in the immortality of man, as well as to the scepticism of the Greeks as regards the myths of other peoples. Five hundred years B.C. it was reported of the Getæ—perhaps the ancestors of the Goths—that they believed that death was no real cessation of existence, but only a departure to live with Zalmoxis, who was their god, and, so they believed, the only god.

The Greeks related of this Zalmoxis that he was really a human being who had once lived on earth as the slave of Pythagoras, and that, having acquired wealth, he returned to his own country, Thrace, where he taught his countrymen—hitherto ignorant barbarians—the doctrine that neither he, nor they, nor any of their descendants would perish, but that they would all go to a place where they would live for ever in the enjoyment of all that could be desired. The Greeks further recounted that Zalmoxis built himself a secret chamber in which he hid for three years, being mourned by his countrymen, whom he had formerly entertained lavishly, as one who was dead. He then re-appeared to them, and they were thus convinced of the resurrection of men from the grave.

Herodotus, the first historian who ever doubted a marvel, states, with his usual though not invariable caution, that he himself does not put entire faith in this story, neither does he entirely discredit it. However, whether Zalmoxis by a trick pretended to have risen from

[1] See Chapter IV.

[2] Herodotus, iv, 95-96.

the dead after three years, or even whether Zalmoxis ever existed, is of little importance. The fact remains that the Getæ believed in a resurrection after death, and believed it because they had heard that their god who had formerly lived on the earth had, before he went finally to the abode of the departed, risen from the dead.

Before we pass on from the Greeks, we must notice one of the most interesting cosmological and eschatological speculations invented, or at any rate recorded, by Plato. According to him, the world, having been set in motion by God, rolled forward for 36,000 years, then backward for 36,000 years, then forward again, and so on for ever.[1] When rolling in one direction men are born and die as at present. When rolling in the reverse direction men are not born into the world, but those who died in the previous cycle rise in turn from their graves, grow younger and smaller until they vanish entirely, to be reborn in the succeeding cycle of the world's revolutions.[2]

Here, again, we find this idea of resurrection from the dead which, whether as history, as myth, or as allegory, was so familiar to the Greeks. To believe in a new resurrection required no great effort on the part of men who lived in those days, as they believed that numerous resurrections had taken place during the history of the world. Later on, when Greece's dominion was confined to the intellectual sphere and Rome ruled over all the known world west of Persia, resurrections from the dead were still believed in and expected.

For a long time after his death men throughout the Roman world believed that Nero would come to life again, and at one time it was widely believed that he had actually done so, and was gathering together a great army

[1] An idea which curiously foreshadows the modern theory of constantly recurring evolution and dissolution of solar systems.

[2] Perhaps this myth was not intended to be taken as a literal scientific fact. If the former part of it may be said to resemble Herbert Spencer's cosmology, the latter may be said to resemble Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking-Glass"!

in the East and about to march on Rome to punish his enemies.[1] Men had come to believe that resurrection from the dead must be possible to any one sufficiently wise and learned to have discovered the formula.[2] In the "Texts of the Saviour," fragments of which have survived as an appendix to the "Pistis Sophia,"[3] the act of raising the dead is spoken of as a magic rite performed by diabolic agencies, and only to be resorted to for the purpose of converting men to Christianity.

Evidently it was believed that the dead had often been raised, and that such resurrections did not necessarily involve divine agency. In such a credulous atmosphere the story of a resurrection would easily be believed, and no proofs of its occurrence would be required. Moreover, we learn from Irenæus that to his own knowledge, and in his own time (about the end of the second century), a resurrection of the dead was far from being esteemed an uncommon event; that the miracle was frequently performed on necessary occasions, by prolonged fasting and the joint supplication of the members of a Church; and that the persons thus restored by the prayers of the Christians had lived among them for many years afterwards.[4]

When we read this we begin to suspect the credulity of this "Father of the Church"; and when we hear that Theophilus, a bishop of Antioch who had also asserted that such miracles were frequently performed by the faithful, on being challenged by a Greek whom he wished to convert to produce a single person who had actually been raised from the dead, declined the challenge, we are astounded that the pretension that such miracles were

[1] There have been many other cases of people expecting the triumphant return of Messiahs, Mahdis, and dead heroes. In the Middle Ages the reappearance of Charlemagne was expected by many some generations after he had died.

[2] Those who desire to learn the secret of raising the dead can find the correct formulæ and diagrams for effecting that purpose in the "Egyptian Hieratic Papyri, Second Series," published by the British Museum in 1923.

[3] A Gnostic work of which a manuscript copy was discovered in the nineteenth century.

[4] Papias (quoted by Eusebius) makes the same assertion.

common could have been sustained for so long.[1] But at that time such stories were told of many others besides Christians and besides gods. Apollonius of Tyana,[2] a contemporary of the very earliest Christians, was said to have raised a young woman from the dead; and the most detailed account which has come down to us of this story has a remarkable resemblance to the Christian story of the raising of Jairus's daughter. For the raising of Jairus's daughter, as described in Mark v, Matthew ix, and Luke viii, is noticeable by reason of the doubts thrown upon the actual death of the little girl. The relatives and onlookers were, according to these accounts, all convinced that the maiden was dead, but Jesus is represented as saying: "She is not dead, but sleepeth." In Philostratus's "Life of Apollonius" a very similar episode is described, and Philostratus himself expresses the same doubt as to whether the young woman had really been dead as reported.[3] Philostratus writes as follows:—

> Here, too, is a miracle which Apollonius worked. A girl had died just in the hour of her marriage, and the bridegroom was following her bier lamenting, as was natural, his marriage left unfulfilled, and the whole of Rome was mourning with him, for the maiden belonged to a consular family. Apollonius then, witnessing their grief, said: "Put down the bier, for I will stay the tears that you are shedding for this maiden." And withal he asked what was her name. The crowd accordingly thought that he was about to deliver such an oration as is commonly delivered as much to grace the funeral as to stir up

[1] See Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," chapter xv, for both the statement made by Irenæus in his work, "Against the Heretics," and the Greek's challenge to Theophilus.

[2] Apollonius of Tyana was believed to be the incarnate Proteus and son of Zeus. For account of the annunciation of his birth see Philostratus's "Life of Apollonius," book i, chapter iv; and for account of wonders that attended his birth see ibid, chapter v. The re-incarnation idea was, of course, a very common one. Pythagoras was said by his votaries to have really been a Trojan hero, Euphorbus, who had come to life again.

[3] Philostratus wrote this book very early in the third century, and used for his purpose some earlier memoirs of the sage's life. Apollonius lived in the first century A.D., so just over a hundred years elapsed between his death and the writing of his principal surviving biography, which is said to be founded upon the contemporary work of one of his disciples.

> lamentation; but he did nothing of the kind, but, merely touching her and whispering in secret some spell over her, at once woke up the maiden from her seeming death and the girl spoke out loud, and returned to her father's house, just as Alcestis did when she was brought back to life by Hercules. And the relatives of the maiden wanted to present him with the sum of 150,000 sesterces, but he said that he would freely present the money to the young lady by way of dowry. Now, whether he detected some spark of life in her, which those who were nursing her had not noticed—for it was said that, although it was raining at the time, a vapour went up from her face—or whether life was really extinct and he restored it by the warmth of his touch, is a mysterious problem which neither I myself nor those who were present could decide.[1]

It will be noticed that this story very closely resembles that of the resurrection of Jairus's daughter. The latter is the daughter of a ruler of the synagogue; the former relates to a member of a consular family. In each case the dead person is touched, and a curious formula—Talitha cumi, in the Gospel story—is used. And both stories hint at the possibility of the apparently dead person having only been in a trance, though both relate the story as a genuine miracle.

It is, of course, possible that one of the stories was a deliberate plagiarism of the other; but, at all events, both were told and both were believed in the days when men were ready to accept all such stories as true. Philostratus, more critical than most of his contemporaries, does, indeed, suspect a rational explanation of the event; but, like his contemporaries, is prepared to give it the benefit of the doubt, speaks of a miracle, and fails to suspect that the whole story may have been fiction.[2]

[1] Philostratus's "Life of Apollonius," book iv, chapter xlv. Conybeare's translation quoted.

[2] There was an absurd story current about this time of a Pagan Thessalonian woman who was said to have raised a corpse to life by the drastic process of whipping it with a snake. Contemporary authors appear to have vied with each other in telling "tall" stories, and no one thought it his business to throw doubts on such stories. Nowadays there is usually, though not always, a distinction between avowed fiction and alleged fact.

The early Christians did not dispute the fact that such pagan resurrections occurred. For example: Origen, in his book "Against Celsus," does not dispute the possibility of the resurrection of Anaxagoras, but argues that if it took place it was the work of devils. He further argues that as it was a well-known fact that resurrections from the dead had been brought about by magic and by the agency of devils it ought to be admitted that God too could raise the dead.

In all the disputes of the Church fathers with "infidels" and heretics we find the same willingness on the side of both parties to acknowledge that the miraculous is not peculiar to their own divinities and holy men, but at the same time each party maintains that its own *miracles* are the work of a divinity, while the *magic* of its opponents is the work of the evil one.[1]

A study of anthropology reveals to us some possible explanations of the credulity of the early Christians and others.

At certain festivals, when men and women of races in a low stage of culture are worked up into a state of religious frenzy, cases of real catalepsy occur, as well as cases of pretended death. As apparently dead bodies, men are removed and kept for periods, which vary from a few weeks to a few years, in retreats where they are taught "the mysteries." They then re-appear among their friends, and are spoken of as men who have risen from the dead. Practices of this kind are reported from West Africa, Central Africa, and other places,[2] and seem at one time to have taken place in Asia Minor.

For in the "mysteries" to which adherents of many ancient oriental religions were initiated before they were

[1] Eusebius does indeed express doubts as to the actual occurrence of the resurrection said to have been performed by Apollonius of Tyana; but he also accuses Apollonius of practising witchcraft, and implies that if the miracle really took place it was by this agency that it was performed. See Conybeare's edition of Philostratus's "Apollonius of Tyana."

[2] See Hartland's "Primitive Paternity," pp. 180 *et seq.*

admitted to the congregation of their fellow worshippers, there was very often a pretence made of killing the initiate—after which he "rose again," regenerate, as a member of the faithful.[1]

Those who wished to become priests of Serapis appear, as part of the ceremonies of initiation, to have undergone a mock death and burial, on arising from which they celebrated what was called their birthday. In some of the Eleusinian rites some such ceremony seems also to have taken place, the initiates entering a chest which presumably represented a coffin.

The actual rites at these ceremonies were always kept secret, and it is only from scattered references and hints that we are able to guess the actual nature of the "mysteries" explained to initiates; but that some such rite, symbolic of death to the old carnal life and resurrection to a new spiritual life, took place is practically certain.[2]

So the actual physical resurrections of which the Christian "Fathers of the Church" boasted were probably intended to act as counterblasts to the stories told by the adherents of competitive religions and competitive sects about resurrections which were spiritual regenerations of the worldly-minded. And, besides this, we know that in the early days of Christianity much "spiritualism" was practised, and many claimed to be able to call up the spirits of the dead in the same way as the modern Spiritualist claims to do so.

It is not necessary here to enter into any discussion about Sciomancy, or the calling up of shadows "from the vasty deep." In medieval works on magic this "science" is described as one of the methods of resurrection. Spirits were to be summoned by means other than those used to bring about bodily resurrections; and the methods to be used in both kinds of resurrection are described for

[1] See Frazer's "Golden Bough," 2nd ed., vol. 3, pp. 422–45, for examples.
[2] See Legge's "Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity," vol. i, chapter ii, pp. 60–64.

all and sundry to practise an they will. As means of impressing a sense of awe upon credulous observers, the ritual described was doubtless found effective; but as the resurrection stories with which we are now concerned all deal with bodily returns from death, we need not inquire into the tricks of fortune tellers, sorcerers, and magicians, who conjured up shadowy forms, nor into the open-mouthed anxiety of their dupes to be deceived. The resurrection of Jesus according to Christian doctrine, the resurrection of other man-gods as represented in the mystery plays, and the medieval miracles of resurrection which we shall soon have to consider, do not come under this class of facts; so, even if we believed that such phenomena as the conjuring up of ghosts ever occur, our belief or disbelief in the resurrection doctrine would not be affected.

Another way in which legends of bodily resurrections may sometimes originate is in a confusion of thought between an alleged spiritual ascension to heaven and an actual physical translation to the region where the gods dwell above the earth.

Of a Japanese prince named Yamato-Dake it is related that after his death and burial a white bird was seen to fly away from his tomb. His coffin was disinterred, opened, and found to be empty, save for the clothes in which he had been buried; and his son, who afterwards became Emperor of Japan, announced that Yamato-Dake had ascended to heaven in the form of the white bird.[1] But, however such stories originated, they were believed to be historical accounts of actual physical facts, and they are to be found in the scriptures and folk-lore of races living in every longitude, from the easternmost coasts of

[1] Aston's "Nihongi," cited by Hartland, "Primitive Paternity," p. 179. For examples of Christian legends about doves being seen to ascend to Heaven from the dead bodies of saints, see Maury, "Légendes Pieuses du Moyen Age," pp. 184–6. At the funerals of Roman emperors an eagle was often let loose to appear like the soul of the dead monarch going to Olympus. (Dion Cassius and Herodian relate this; see op. cit., p. 186.)

Asia, right across Europe, to the westernmost coast of America. Moreover, many of them can have originated only out of men's love for "tall" stories—men's desire to tell a striking story and men's desire to believe one. In the ecclesiastical histories published by the Catholics to glorify the lives of martyrs and saints we find many such stories. Of these, one of the most celebrated is the story of "The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus," which, in spite of the word "sleepers" and of the way in which it was told, was always related as evidence of a resurrection of the dead. In the year 250, during the persecution of the Christians by the Emperor Decius, seven noble youths of Ephesus are said to have concealed themselves in a large cave.[1] Hearing of this, Decius commanded that the entrance to the cavern should be blocked up by huge stones, and the seven Christians left to starve to death. This was duly done, and nothing more was heard of the seven until their names and their fate had long been forgotten.

One hundred and eighty-seven years later,[2] "*when a heresy denying the resurrection of the dead had broken out,*" the landed proprietor who then owned the mountain in which the cave was situated gave orders that these stones should be removed and used for building purposes

[1] The legend makers' intimate acquaintance with the facts is, as usual, vouched for by a list of the names of these noble Christians: Maximian, Malchus, Marcian (or Martinian), Dionysius, John, Serapion, and Constantine. In the version quoted by Gibbon the youth called Malchus is replaced by one called Jamblichus.

[2] There are several versions of this story. Gibbon, who quotes the version said to have been handed down by Gregory of Tours (sixth century; his authorship is now doubted), gives the shortest period—viz., 187 years, which does, indeed, correspond most closely with the interval between the reigns of Decius and of Theodosius; but other versions give 227, 229, and 309 years, the last being that given in the Koran, where the legend appears in a Moslem garb, and as a divine revelation. Jacques de Voragine, in his "Golden Legends" (whose version is followed by Baring Gould in his "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages"), gives 360 years. The Koran version includes a dog among the sleepers, and this dog is one of the ten "historical" animals who are said to have gained admission to Paradise! His name was either Katmir or Al Rakim. See chapter xviii of the Koran, notes on pp. 107–12, vol. ii, of Sale's translation.

on his estate. As soon as his slaves removed the stones and let the light of day into the cavern, the seven interned youths, who had slept throughout the whole of this long period, awoke. Ignorant that their sleep had been unduly prolonged, but feeling exceedingly hungry, they despatched one of their number to purchase food in the town. Great was the envoy's surprise when he beheld over the principal gate of Ephesus a large cross, that very emblem which—only the day before, he thought—the Emperor Decius had been persecuting. Great, too, was the surprise of the inhabitants of Ephesus when they beheld a stranger dressed in an antiquated fashion, and offering, in exchange for bread, coins current in the reign of the Emperor Decius. Mutual inquiries revealed the astounding fact that the seven youths had slept, without visibly ageing and without ever awakening, for a period of about two hundred years. The Bishop of Ephesus, accompanied by the principal clergy and citizens, and by the Emperor Theodosius himself—opportunely in the neighbourhood, and hurriedly sent for—visited the cave and had the story of the envoy confirmed by the remainder of the sleepers, who all, as soon as they had again related their story, immediately expired. But in the course of telling their story Maximian stated that God had resuscitated them before the great resurrection day, in order that men might believe in the resurrection of the body, and the Emperor announced that he saw them "as though he saw the Saviour restoring Lazarus."[1]

[1] The story can be traced to within half a century of the alleged event. (See Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," chapter xxxiii; see also J. M. Robertson's "Christianity and Mythology," pp. 223–6, second edition, for discussion of the Seven Martyrs theme in mythology.) The alleged remains of the seven sleepers are at present in a large stone sarcophagus which is exhibited in St. Victor's Church at Marseilles. (See Baring Gould, op. cit., for other examples in folk-lore of long sleeps.) A man who spoke of this story of the seven sleepers as a fable was denounced by a certain Father Marraci as "a monster of iniquity and the off-scum of heretics," and this though the intolerant Father himself considered that there might be doubts about some of the details! Doubtless Marraci lamented the decay of innocent faith, and doubtless some modern priests and parsons sigh for a return of the golden age of Faith in which Marraci lived.

Though, as has already been stated, the story is ostensibly one of re-awakening from sleep and not of resurrection from death, there can have been between such a sleep as that and death but very little distinction in the eyes of the story teller or of the story believers in former days, and the story is repeatedly told by ecclesiastical historians of the Middle Ages as evidence of bodily resurrections. At the time when it was first told, stories of resurrections from the dead had become exceedingly common, and were becoming more common still. Before the Middle Ages were ended by that greatest of all resurrections—the resuscitation of learning—which taught men the elements of historical criticism, the gentle trickle of prehistoric resurrections had become a raging torrent of Catholic restorations to life. From the time when Christianity became the established official religion of the Roman Empire until the time of the Reformation the number of recorded resurrections increased rapidly. Before a man is canonized, proofs satisfactory to the Papal authority that he, during his lifetime, performed miracles are absolutely necessary; so nearly every saint[1] in the Christian Calendar is a proved worker of miracles! Many of these miracles were resurrections from the dead.

According to St. Augustine, the relics of the martyred St. Stephen worked a very large number of miracles, including some resurrections from the dead. He tells us[2] how "a religious female who lived at Caspalium" was restored to life by having her corpse wrapped in a dress which had been taken to the shrine of the martyr; and how the daughter of a Syrian named Bassus was restored to life at a place called Hippo, in almost identically the same way. He relates also how the child of a collector

[1] Of some of the saints canonized prior to 1134 no proof of miracle-working was required, but subsequent to that date proof of miracles was required prior to beatification, and proof of further miracles prior to canonization.

[2] In "The City of God," book xxii, chapter viii, the saint assures us that he had heard of, and believed in, many other resurrections, but does not enumerate them, because he is not in possession of such indisputable evidence of their occurrence as he possesses regarding those he does report.

of taxes named Irenæus was restored to life, after preparations had been made for his funeral, by means of oil from the same martyr's grave. Another child, whose father was named Eleusinus, was, we learn from the same authority, restored from death to life after being laid upon a memorial which had been erected to St. Stephen. And these are not the only resurrections from the dead reported by St. Augustine to have taken place in his own diocese. He acknowledges that the fame of these miracles had not spread very far even in the towns in which they took place, but he assures us that they actually did take place, and that they had been "reported by faithful Christians to the faithful." He states that he deliberately refrains from making any mention of resurrections which had taken place outside his own diocese, that he himself had actually either witnessed or investigated the cases he quotes, and that these miracles were as certain though not as well known as the ones recorded in the Gospels. There had taken place in his own time, he tells us, many other miracles as marvellous to relate, but their recital would fill too many volumes.

If the working of miracles is an essential sign of sanctity, Stephen, by his posthumous works, appears to have well earned his sainthood. The fourth-century St. Augustine, though not one of the early Fathers of the Church, is generally regarded as one of the greatest. It is through him and through earlier and probably just as credulous "Fathers" that we inherit our Christian doctrines. The resurrections which he reports as having occurred in his own diocese and in his own day are far better attested than any of the resurrections reported in the New Testament. The former are reported by a witness of whom we know not only the name but very many details of his life, and of whom we still possess one of the greatest of autobiographies; the latter are reported by pseudonymous writers of whose real names and lives we know nothing whatever.

St. Stephen was not the only Biblical character of whom resurrection stories not related in the Bible were afterwards told. For example, it was related that John, the evangelist and favourite disciple, had performed such a miracle. When St. John, so the story goes, returned to Ephesus from Patmos, he met a funeral procession bearing his former friend, Drusiana, to her grave. He was very sorrowful, for Drusiana had excelled in good works; so he ordered the bier to be placed on the ground, and prayed to God, who was pleased to grant his request. Drusiana arose from her coffin, and returned to Ephesus with St. John, who thereafter dwelt again, as he had previously been wont to do, in her house.

This resurrection is the subject of a beautiful fresco still to be seen in the Strozzi chapel at Florence.[1] That it occurred was firmly believed by all Christians until the Reformation, when Protestants lightened the strain upon their capacity for credulity by discarding all miracles save those related in the books selected to form their Bible. It is still related in various "Lives of the Saints" published for consumption in Catholic countries, and doubtless believed by many of the more ignorant members of that sect. Those "Lives of the Saints" are full of such stories, and they were regarded by our ancestors as true.

St. Ambrose, the patron of St. Augustine, was said by his disciple Paulinus to have raised a dead child to life again by stretching himself, like Elijah and Elisha, upon the corpse. St. Macarius is said to have restored a dead man to life so as to convince another man of the truth of "the Resurrection." Patroclus, a martyr under Nero, is said to have been raised from the dead, and to have informed the Emperor that it was Jesus Christ who had thus raised him.

Perhaps as a foil to resurrections, the saints occasion-

[1] See Mrs. Jameson's "Sacred and Legendary Art."

ally, it appears, caused those who were alive to die. For example, two beggars once attempted to deceive St. Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea by one of them pretending to be dead while the other begged for money wherewith to buy a shroud for his friend's body. The kindly saint took off his own cloak, laid it upon the pretended corpse, and walked away. The other beggar then walked up to his prone friend, and found that he was no longer shamming, but really dead. A similar story is told of another saint. Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea performed many more miracles attested by Basil and other celebrated fourth-century saints and holy men. He moved large rocks, caused lakes to dry up and his staff to become a growing tree, besides performing all the more common miracles of healing and casting out devils. St. Martin of Tours, another fourth-century divine, is said to have raised at least three dead persons to life.

Returning nearer to the time of Stephen, we find that St. Julian, who is said to have lived in France during the first half of the second century, restored to life at different times three persons whose parents were at once, together with many other people who witnessed the miracles, converted to Christianity. Jovian, one of these restored persons, described the demons he had seen in Hell.

St. George, the patron saint of England, was, we are pleased to find, as distinguished in this respect as any of his colleagues. He is said to have led the Emperor Diocletian to a cemetery, and, casually selecting a grave, to have raised the dead out of it, so as to convince the Emperor (who had recently attempted to poison him) that the God whom he—St. George—worshipped could not only preserve life, but restore it. He also on another occasion restored to life a dead cow belonging to a man named Glycerius.

According to a Moslem legend—for St. George enjoys the unique distinction of being at the same time a Christian saint and a prophet of Islam—El Khoudi, as they

call him, was put to death seven times and rose again from the dead on six of these occasions. The but slightly less incredible Christian versions of the legend relate only that seven attempts were made to slay him. Spears were thrust at him, but snapped like straw when they touched him. A wheel of knives and swords was set in motion to cut him to pieces, and seemed to have effected its duty so well that the saint was left for dead; but on the appearance of an angel St. George, who was always quite the soldier, stood up and gave a military salute. On the return of the would-be executioners it was discovered that all his wounds were already healed. He was then thrown into a pit of quicklime, from which he suffered no ill effects. He had his limbs broken, but was immediately afterwards found on his knees perfectly whole. He was shod in red-hot iron shoes, but recovered. He was flogged until the flesh fell off his back, but was found well and unmarked on the next day. And, finally, he was given two cups to drink, whereof one contained a potion guaranteed to make men mad and the other a deadly poison; but he suffered no ill effects from drinking them.

The tortures are related in other ways in some versions. He is placed on the rack, pinced with red-hot tongs, beaten with sledge-hammers, thrown over a precipice, lowered into a well with a stone round his neck, soused with molten lead, roasted over a fire, and otherwise ill-treated, but always recovers. So George of Cappadocia well earned his canonization, and demonstrated the fact that true believers would not be hurt if they drink any deadly thing.[1]

Not so famous as St. George is another fourth-century miracle worker, St. Hilarion by name. Yet he is said to have restored to life three sons of a lady who had visited him to invoke his compassion, and later on to have restored to life an infant who died unbaptised. In

[1] See Appendix I for note about St. George.

Poitiers Cathedral this incident is still recorded in sculpture. St. Zenobia, Bishop of Florence early in the fifth century, is said to have raised at different times no fewer than five dead persons to life again. One of these had fallen from his horse down a precipice and was dreadfully mangled, but his body was made whole again; another had been run over by a carriage, but recovered perfect health as well as his life. St. James of Tarentaise, in the fifth century, returned from a journey to find that one of his friends had died and been buried in his absence. He wept over the grave, and his friend came forth restored to life. St. Severin in 482 restored a dead woman to life. St. Eleutherius in 531 restored to life, many days after her death and burial, a young woman who had been upbraided for making advances to him. This theme is a favourite one with medieval ecclesiastical historians. A saint named Paphnutius, who appears, like many other saints, to have been able to restrain his passions only by taking exceptionally drastic steps, was, it is said, once tempted by a beautiful and amorous female. To enable him to resist the temptation he burnt off his hand, whereupon the lady fell dead at his feet. But, repenting of having inflicted so dire a punishment for her offence, the saint offered up prayers, and the seductress was miraculously restored to life, or rather to an existence destined to be spent behind the walls of a convent.

St. Benedict (480–543) restored to life two persons, one of whom the devil had deliberately crushed to death under the walls of a monastery which was being built, while the other was the only son of a peasant.[1] St. Gildas (494–570) raised from death a woman who had

[1] Another story is told in connection with St. Benedict, though not of a resurrection performed by himself. He once excommunicated two nuns, apparently for the trivial offence of gossiping, and when they came to die, while still excommunicate, their bodies were by mistake buried in the church. When, at the next celebration of the Holy Communion, all those who were not going to partake were ordered to depart the two corpses arose from their grave and walked out of the church!

been murdered when pregnant. She not only lived, but afterwards gave birth to a healthy child. St. Severus, in the sixth century, having delayed attending on a dying man, arrived too late to give him extreme unction before he died. Horrified at having "murdered the man's soul," he raised him from the dead and administered the sacrament, after which the man survived for seven days.

There are several other cases of such a brief period of survival after resurrection. Martin, a monk of Pomposa, lived only for three days after being raised from the dead by the good offices of St. Michael, whom he met in Hell. During that short space of time he was unable or unwilling to tell anything more about the infernal region than that its horrors were indescribable, and that he had met there many of his relations and acquaintances.

St. Avitus in the sixth century raised a dead man to life again. The man subsequently related the story of his resurrection to the Bishop of Chartres, who vouches for the truth of the story. St. Amandus (594–684) is said to have restored to life a brigand who had been executed in Tournai; and he was not the only saint to perform such an act of compassion for a man who had suffered a criminal's death. St. Valery in 619 raised to life again a man who had been put to death by hanging. A chapel built on the spot still commemorates this miracle.

St. Fursy in the year 650 raised to life again, so it is said, the son and the daughter of the King of Ulster. Their naked dead bodies had been thrown into the sea, and were some time afterwards washed up at the feet of the saint, who was much shocked at the sight of their nudity. Having restored the corpses to life, he clothed them, and then threw his stick into the sea, and it—"as if it had understanding"—guided their "footsteps" home to their far-off parents.

St. Patrick, about two hundred years earlier, is alleged to have raised from the dead not only a man but the man's

horse also.[1] The patron saint of Ireland was, it appears from the following story, able to perform resurrections by proxy and at a distance. A nun, the daughter of Daire, conceived a guilty passion for a priest, Benignus, who had a most beautiful voice. Pretending to be ill, she took to her bed, and sent for Benignus on the plea that she required his spiritual ministrations. But, presumably as a punishment for her forward behaviour, she became really ill, and died. Benignus, though he did not in any way reciprocate her love, took compassion upon her, and obtained from St. Patrick some holy water, with which he restored the nun to life.[2]

Even in England some miraculous resurrections are reported to have taken place. The head of a family which lived at Cuningham, in Northumbria—so the venerable Bede tells us[3]—died early one night and came to life again early the next morning. He related that, immediately after his death, he had been conducted by an angel first to a purgatory where the dead flung themselves from side to side of a valley in a vain endeavour to escape the flames and heat of the one side and the ice and cold of the other; then to the mouth of Hell, where he saw laughing devils thrusting down the souls of men and women; then to a heavenly purgatory whose inhabitants were happier than any men upon earth; and lastly to the outskirts of a place which was indescribably more beautiful and pleasant than even the heavenly purgatory. His guide had explained

[1] As we have already seen, St George is said to have restored a cow to life. Other saints—notably St. Germanus, St. Garmon, and St. Mochua, and an uncanonized abbot, William of Villiers—are also believed to have raised dead animals to life again. The "martyr," St. Alexander, who is supposed to have lived in the ninth century, was reported to have looked down from Heaven and restored to life a pig which St. Grata had killed and eaten in company with the mourners who had attended Alexander's funeral. St. Maidoc, as we shall see later, also restored to life animals that had been eaten; and the Scandinavian god Thor very usefully brought back to life goats that had not only been killed but also eaten. In times of food shortage the services of such gods and saints would be invaluable!

[2] See p. 184, "The History of Ireland to the Coming of Henry II," by Arthur Ua Clerigh, M.A., K.C., for two versions of this story.

[3] "Ecclesiastical History," book v, chapter xii.

to him, so he related, what these places were, and told him how the dead could be relieved from Hell's purgatory by the prayers, alms, and fasting of the living, and "especially by masses." On his return to life this man bade farewell to his wife and children, and retired to a monastery to spend the rest of his life in prayer, hoping to go direct to Heaven when next he died.

Maybe a real trance and dream, maybe a pious invention, but related and believed in as a true case of resurrection from death. These descents into Hell, tours of the nether regions, and subsequent return to life on earth were, according to mythology and ecclesiastical history, very common in both ancient and comparatively modern days. Most of the horrors of Hell which seventeenth- and eighteenth-century divines loved to depict were originally reported by these returned travellers. How gruesome these horrors were is known only to those who have studied the terrible warnings uttered chiefly by Protestant divines.[1]

St. Wulfrum (674–729) raised from the dead a lad who had been strangled on a gibbet as a human sacrifice in a heathen religious ceremony. And St. Attalus in the seventh century also raised from the dead victims of those who were not true believers. One man whom he restored to life had been put to death by a heretic (Arian) king, and another had been killed by pagans. St. Sacerdos, also in the seventh century, raised temporarily to life

[1] The celebrated "Purgatory of St. Patrick" was said to be entered by a cavern situated on an island in Lough Derg. Many persons from different parts of Europe visited this Purgatory, or Hell, and related what they had seen there—horrible tales of burning people and of venomous reptiles who bit and stung the struggling inmates. (See T. Wright's "St. Patrick's Purgatory" for a full account of the various descents said to have been made into this Hell; or Baring Gould's "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages" for a shorter account.) For other accounts of Hell related by persons who had been raised from the dead after a sojourn in that resort, see chapter v of "The Christian Hell," by H. B. Bonner, who has collected from both Catholic and Protestant sources a large quantity of the most gruesome products of the human imagination—those speculations which we are sometimes told to respect as religious experiences!

again his father, who had died without first receiving the last communion.

St. Poppo (978–1048), on his way to visit the Emperor Henry, saw a wolf carrying off a shepherd in its mouth! He pursued this unusually powerful wolf, and at last found in a swamp the mangled and quite dead body of the shepherd. He restored him to life, and shared his frugal repast with him. St. Godard was, it appears, exceptionally gifted. In 1038 he raised not merely one man at a time, but all the dead who lay buried round the cathedral of Hildesheim. This he did, it is said, so that by obeying his orders they would show that he spoke with the authority of God. If even the dead obeyed him, and at his command rose from their graves and came to life, surely his own flock should give heed to his orders.

The chroniclers of these miracles usually draw some moral of this kind. Obedience and conversion are often indicated as the results of witnessing a resurrection, and those who read the story were doubtless expected to follow the example of the witnesses, remembering that to believe without seeing was even more blessed than believing after witnessing the event. St. Melanius is said to have converted a large number of persons to Christianity by raising a man from the dead in their presence, and doubtless his motive for performing the miracle was excellent; but in the selection of beneficiaries the raisers of the dead appear to have followed no principle. The fortunate persons who were restored to their relatives, and, let us hope, to a life of utility and enjoyment, appear to have been selected haphazard and somewhat invidiously. Millions were never even cured of an ailment. A few, of whose exceptional claims on the saints' powers we, however, hear nothing, were more than once favoured.

St. Cyril in the twelfth century, for example, was the means of a man rising from the dead, though he had

already, long before, restored his sight to him. St. Dominic (1170–1221), the founder of the Dominican order, raised three persons from the dead; none of them, it seems, exceptionally deserving. And in Barthelemy's Life of St. Francis,[1] known as "The Golden Book," it is stated that the saint and his companions between them raised over a thousand persons from the dead, and the names of these fortunate persons are not even mentioned. It is not yet a hundred years since another book, published in France, was devoted to miracles performed by this saint—miracles which its author[2] declares were proved by the very best of evidence to have occurred.

St. Vincent Ferrier (1357–1419) raised two men to life again, one of them being a Jew who was thus converted to Christianity. St. Coletta or Nicoletta (1380–1447) raised from the dead many hundreds of people, chiefly still-born children. Among the adults he restored to life was a nun who had died without first receiving absolution. Her he restored to life for only sufficient time for confession to be made and absolution given. St. Francis of Paula (1416–1507), who is described as at the time "holding in his hands the keys of life and death," raised his own nephew to life again after death. St. Philip of Neri (1515–1595) raised to life a friend of his who had died; but the latter, after making his last confession to the saint, preferred immediately to die again—for he appears to have been given his choice—than to remain alive and subject to worldly temptation.

Women may be pleased to know that it is not only men who have performed this greatest of all miracles. Marianne de Jesus of Quito (1618–1645) not only restored to life again her niece whose skull had been fractured by the kick of a mule, but so healed the wound that none could tell where the injury had been! Later on she saw in a vision the dead body of a woman

[1] St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), founder of the Franciscan Order.
[2] A priest named Candide Challipe. The book was published in 1841.

who had been first strangled and then thrown over a cliff. She sent for the body and restored it not only to life but to robust health. Even the poor half-witted and epileptic girl, St. Columba, was in the fifteenth century credited with having raised a child from the dead. A monastery was built to commemorate this event. Other saints who are said to have raised men, women, and children from the dead are Saint Benoit, Saint Maurille,[1] Saint Alexander, Saint Nicholas,[2] Saint Francis Xavier,[3] Saint Gulla, and Saint Francis Hieronimus. They performed this miracle sometimes immediately after the death of the person, sometimes as the body was in a hearse on the way to the cemetery, and sometimes after the body had been long laid in a grave. As such resurrections were quoted at canonization proceedings, they must have been considered properly attested miraculous events. The evidence for their actual occurrence must have been sufficiently good to satisfy the ecclesiastical authorities. In many cases the alleged evidence is still on record, and very strong it sometimes seems until we notice that the advocatus diaboli was as anxious as any one else not to throw doubts on the stories, and unless we have sufficient acquaintance with human nature to know that men and women will often swear to facts which, maybe, they believe, but of which they have no real knowledge whatever. Men were in those days, as in earlier days, so inclined to believe in the miraculous, and so willing and anxious to believe in resurrections, that the

[1] See below, p. 88-89.

[2] Three murdered boys at once. Bits of their bodies had been mixed with the saint's food.

[3] This very celebrated missionary to India, Japan, and China lived from 1506–1552, and was one of the first seven Jesuits. He is said by his biographers to have raised several dead persons, including one whose body was in an advanced stage of decomposition, to life and perfect health. He performed, according to the chroniclers, innumerable other miracles, and possessed the invaluable gift of being able to quell any storm, however violent, by merely raising his hand. On one occasion, when he had failed to obtain a human audience for his discourse, the fish from the sea answered his summons, left their native element, and came and sat on the stones of the sea shore as an example to the insusceptible Chinese.

burden of proof was shifted from those who claimed that the miracle had been performed on to those who denied it, or who, for the purposes of the inquiry, posed as the doubters. Pride in the local celebrity urged men to claim for him powers and performances as great as or greater than the saints of other districts. Moreover, the tomb of a saint who had performed the greatest of all miracles was a lucrative asset both to a cathedral or church and the town in which it stood. Pilgrims from far and near came to visit it, and the clergy and the citizens all benefited in repute and in pocket. It is not implied that always, or even generally, conscious deception was practised, but only that men believe very easily that which they wish to believe, and that which, prima facie, appears to them probable as well as desirable; and that the same spirit which causes honest and patriotic men to praise their own country even when she is in the wrong caused men of old time to claim that their own particular saints were unsurpassed by the saints of any rival community. Similarly, hundreds of years earlier, it had been claimed for every competitive man-god that he, like his rivals, had risen from the dead.

Some of these resurrections, notably one performed by St. Vincent Ferrier (supra), may have been deliberate frauds, a disciple feigning death being brought in a coffin to the saint for the latter to exhibit his miraculous powers.[1] That such things should be done, either with or without

[1] We know that resurrections from the dead were simulated by Indian conjurers and fakirs down to quite recent times. It is related of a Colonel Townshend, who lived for a long time in India, that he learned a trick of this kind, and was able to simulate death so well that even skilled medical men were deceived. By some means or other, animation can, it seems, be entirely suspended for considerable periods of time, at the end of which the performer of the trick is apparently raised from the dead. For medical aspect of Colonel Townshend's trick consult (1) "The English Malady; or, A Treatise on Nervous Diseases," by Dr. George Cheyne, fifth edition, published in 1735; (2) "Legal Medicine (in India)," by Major Collis Barry, I.M.S., vol. ii, 1903 edition; (3) "Medical Jurisprudence and Toxicology," by Aitchison Robertson (Black; 1921), under heading "Trance and Catalepsy." And for account of an Indian Yogi known as "The Burying Faqueer" see "Court and Camp of Runjeet Singh," by W. G. Osborne.

the connivance of the saint himself, is only in keeping with the moral standards of the period—a period when the grossest of deceptions were considered laudable if practised with a pious object in view. But doubtless the majority were not frauds, but legendary events—stories which gradually got into circulation and were accepted as true by men who believed in all kinds of non-existing marvels, who were totally oblivious to the regularity of the processes of nature, and who believed that all phenomena were due to the constant interference of supernatural beings.

The examples quoted above are only a few selected specimens out of a vast number of similar stories, and are related in various Lives of Saints in much greater detail than has here been given. There are even a few stories of pet animals being restored to life by the good offices of holy men; and no doubt can remain in the mind of any one who studies medieval literature, and even more modern biographies of the saints, that the ability to raise men from the dead was formerly regarded as a comparatively common gift. The story of a resurrection would not be doubted and accepted only after due inquiry and on good evidence, but would, whenever related, immediately be believed and repeated.

Besides stories of actual resurrections there are hundreds of tales of dead men who hear and speak and make signs while remaining dead, of decapitated heads which speak, and of men who walk for miles carrying their decapitated heads in their own hands.[1] The credulity of the Middle

[1] The most interesting of the stories of saints who carried their own heads after being decapitated are those relating to St. Lucian (67), St. Aphrodisius (69), St. Denis, alias Dionysius the Areopagite (117), St. Desiderius (264), St. Chrysolius (278), St. Proba (fourth century), St. Lucanus, whose head is still kept in Paris at Notre Dame (fifth century); St. Hilarion (eighth century), St. Aventine (813), St. Solangia (880), and St. Leo, Archbishop of Rome (900). In the Rev. Dr. Brewer's "Dictionary of Miracles" some curious details about all these, and references to the authorities who relate them, will be found. Tapestry, pictures, and frescoes in churches still commemorate the miracles, and springs are pointed out which are said to have first flowed when the heads of the saints

Ages and of earlier times was unbounded, and the mere fact that a miracle was reported by men of former times is far from conclusive evidence of its actual occurrence. But the growing number and extravagance of these stories at length made some men suspect the truth of some of them. They became a subject for joking. A little banter about the most absurd of them introduced the virus of scepticism—a virus destined eventually to slay all of them.

In Protestant communities to-day none are believed in, save those about resurrections said to have taken place in or before the first century of the Christian era. No dead person is supposed ever to have come to life again after his death unless the event is recorded in one of the books at present recognized by their ecclesiastical authority as canonical. The orthodox say that they believe in all the resurrections mentioned in the Old Testament and in the New Testament books, but in no other resurrections.

The Catholics nominally believe in a much larger number of these miraculous events—viz., in all those officially recognized by their ecclesiastical authority. And to the Protestant who derides those legends as absurdities they retort that the evidence for their occurrence is, after all, far better than the evidence accepted for the historicity of the Biblical miracles.

The evidence for the raising to life again of the dead man whose corpse was lowered into the grave of Elisha consists of two verses in one chapter of the second book

were buried by their decapitated owners. Papal officials and authors of various "Lives of the Saints" vouch for the truth of the stories. The philosopher Boethius (824) is also said to have carried his own decapitated head for some distance (authority, Baronius [826]; cited by Gibbon, chapter xxxix). The pirate Stoertebecke, captured in 1402 by a Hansa fleet led by the good ship "Chequered Cow of Flanders," ran a considerable distance after his head had been cut off, and was brought down only by a block of wood being thrown at him. St. Winifrede's (or the "Holy") Well in Flintshire is a fountain which sprang up (so we are told) on the spot where Winifrede's head fell when it was cut off by Caradoc, a Welsh prince, whose rude advances she had repelled. St. Beno picked up the head, replaced it on Winifrede's shoulders, and sent her home again safe and sound.

of Kings, written by no one knows whom, and written no one knows when. The evidence for the resurrection from the dead of the man by whose body the corpse of St. Restituta was laid is far better in quality and greater in quantity.[1] Contemporary and celebrated holy men vouch in their memoirs for this and other miracles of a like nature. The miracles are described in detail, and between the different versions of any one story there are far fewer and less important contradictions than there are between the Gospel stories of the Resurrection. So the many and weighty reasons we have for rejecting the historicity of these medieval resurrections apply with still greater force to those Biblical resurrections. Both the medieval and the Biblical are reported by men who expected such miracles, who were anxious to believe in and to relate such stories, and who had no conception of the value of different classes of evidence; and in the case of the Biblical ones we do not even know the names of the men who actually wrote the accounts of them, though we know from their own words that they believed that many other miracles of a like nature had occurred.

In some cases the growth of a resurrection legend can be traced with considerable confidence. For example, the person said to have been raised from the dead by St. Maurille was named René (re-born), and his conversion by St. Maurille is recorded in writings which are older than any which record the physical resurrection. After seven years of irreligious life René was regenerated by the spiritual efforts of St. Maurille, and became himself so saintly that he was subsequently canonized. A few generations pass, and the legend arises that St. Maurille

[1] When the body of St. Restituta was being carried away from Rome at the end of the ninth century, it was laid on the same bed as a man who had recently died. The dead body of the latter immediately came to life again. This occurred at Florence; but the virtue had not yet all gone out of the saint's body, as it caused many other miracles to happen, and eventually brought to life again a dead child whose corpse was placed against it at Arcy in France.

actually raised St. René from his grave seven years after he had died. It is not at all improbable that many of the metaphorical sayings recorded in the Gospels were also misinterpreted by later generations of Christians and regarded as evidential of physical resuscitation. But in most cases the history of the legend or myth cannot be traced, and all that is known is the fact that men firmly believed that some one had actually risen from the dead.

The examples quoted above by no means exhaust the list of resurrections said to have taken place and vouched for by ecclesiastical authority. Some of these saints we have referred to not only raised others from the dead, but themselves came to life again and appeared to their followers after their own deaths. Of St. Ambrose, of St. Maurille, and of others, this is related.[1]

And the readiness of men to believe in resurrections from the dead is still further emphasized by the fact that medieval Christians believed in the resurrection of infidels and pagans as well as of Christian saints.

It was believed that Solomon Molcho,[2] a Jewish Messiah of the sixteenth century, was seen alive and in the flesh several times after he had been burnt alive by order of the French ecclesiastical authorities.[3] Many of his disciples swore that they had seen him, and the belief that he was still alive survived both among them and in Christian circles for a very long time.

Enough examples, perhaps indeed more than were absolutely necessary, have now been given to show that

[1] See Maury, "Légendes Pieuses," for authorities. Many of the stories told above are to be found in the "Dictionary of Miracles" compiled by Dr. Brewer, who quotes a number of authorities for each of the examples he gives of these once widely credited miracles. His list is by no means exhaustive. Other examples, of which some have been included in the above text, can be found in various Lives of Saints, ecclesiastical histories, and similar works. The examples given have been chosen either because of the celebrity of the saint or on account of some curious and typical detail in the story.

[2] His real name was Diego Pirès, but, on being re-converted to Judaism from the Christianity in which he had been brought up, he took a new Jewish name.

[3] In 1532 at Mantua, as a pervert.

men in Christian Europe were ready to believe and report, without any adequate evidence, stories of resurrections from the dead. We will now turn our attention to other parts of the world, and see how among other races and in other ages such beliefs were common.

In India it was and still is widely believed that Krishna raised a widow's son from death to life in much the same way as is recorded of Jesus by Luke alone of the four canonical evangelists,[1] and that Rama raised to life again a Brahmin's son who had been dead for several days.

In Mandi, a State in the Himalayas, a "Nar" or man who was regarded as an incarnation of the local god, Shiva, was formerly put to death as a scapegoat for the people, so as to earn remission of the punishments due to them for their ritualistic neglects. Eventually the Nar ceased to be actually put to death. He now, at the periodic festivals, stands before the shrine and drops down as if dead, and after a short interval a ceremony is performed and he is "raised again from the dead." The arrows, which formerly were shot at this human scapegoat, are now shot at a loaf of bread placed near him. Here, again, we find the idea of a self-sacrificed god raised from the dead after dying to gain absolution for the misdeeds of the people. In many other parts of India such mock sacrifices followed by pretended resurrections have from time immemorial been carried out, and very often the spectators of such ceremonies believe that the death and resurrection are real.[2]

In India and in many other Eastern countries it was believed that there were incantations which had the power of raising the dead to life. Sukra, one of the minor deities (planetary), was said to have known the correct incantation, and even to have possessed charms which had this power; and occasionally, as a great favour, he

[1] Luke vii, 11.

[2] See Frazer's "Golden Bough," chapter iii, 1890 edition, citing authorities from "Asiatic Researches."

imparted the knowledge of the former, or gave away the latter, to some mortal man. There were also said to be certain herbs which had the same miraculous property. Some grew in the mythical island called Drona; others among the Himalayas, whence, on one occasion, so we read in the Ramayana, Hanuman brought them to Ceylon to restore the dying and dead warriors of Rama's army.

In China a legend is current to the effect that after the Buddha's corpse had been burnt upon the funeral pyre his mother Maya came down from Heaven to see him, and that the coffin containing his ashes immediately opened and the Buddha arose, addressed some remarks to her, and said to his beloved disciple Ananda that he had done this as an example to the unfilial of future ages.[1]

The Spaniards who, under the leadership of Cortés, conquered Mexico found two resurrection stories current in that country; and so easily were such stories credited until quite recent times that not only these sixteenth-century Spaniards and their European contemporaries, but even at least one nineteenth-century historian, believed that the resurrections had actually occurred. Though the similarity of the two stories should have aroused suspicions as to their origin, the Catholic Church accepted them as sufficiently well attested to be received as true. According to one of them, Papantzin, the sister of Montezuma, rose from her tomb four days after her burial to warn the Mexican emperor of the approaching fall of his empire—a prophecy which had been fulfilled about ten years later, when Cortés captured the city of Mexico and the story was first heard of by a European. The Vatican was furnished with numerous affidavits to the truth of the story; and, though this stupendous miracle was not attributable to the Christian God, it was nevertheless believed in by the Christians.[2]

According to the other story, the sister of the ruler of

[1] See Edkins, "Chinese Buddhism," p. 57.
[2] See Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico," book ii, chapter vi.

Michuacan, an independent state situated to the west of Mexico, starved herself to death because she was so alarmed at the reports brought by the Aztec ambassadors about the white invaders. But on the fourth day after the body had been deposited in the royal vault she rose from the dead to advise her brother that it would be better for him to embrace the religion of the white strangers than to fight against them.[1]

Further north, on the American continent, we find that a Californian tribe of Indians believed that the bird which they sacrificed at the Panes festival rose again from the dead. But this, though sometimes quoted as a resurrection belief, would probably be more fitly classed among transmigration doctrines, as it closely resembles the idea which caused men, in some parts of the world, to kill their kings before they grew old, so that a young and active soul might be transferred to their successors. It has been reported by some observers that these Indians believed that the bird which was annually sacrificed was always the very same bird; but, even if the Indians implied this, it is possible that they thought only of the spirit of the bird, or of the bird as representative of species, and not of the individual bodily bird. Primitive races distinguish only vaguely between the individual and his tribe, or between the individual and his species; and, of course, when thinking in terms of Soul, personality is apt to be entirely divorced from the body.

For other examples of the beliefs of American Indians and other races in the resurrection of the animals they kill, and of the care which they take, with the object of enabling them to rise again perfect, not to break any of their bones, Sir James Frazer's "Golden Bough"[2] can be consulted. There are in mythology and in folk-lore numerous other tales of resurrections from death, some of them quaintly relating the difficulties of replacing limbs

[1] Prescott, op. cit., book vi, chapter i.
[2] Vol. ii, 1890 edition, pp. 122 *et seq.*

or other portions of the body which had been lost when death took place. In some cases murderers have cut their victim into small pieces, which have to be collected together before the dead person can be restored to life;[1] in others, owing to the loss of some limb, the restored person has an ivory shoulder, or a golden leg, or some such artificial limb, supplied to take the place of the original one. But it is not necessary to ransack classical and medieval literature for more examples. Enough have already been given to show that men were ready to believe, without any adequate evidence, or even without any evidence whatever, that gods, semi-divine beings, and ordinary mortals had occasionally, or even frequently, been raised from the dead. The fact that men so believed is, therefore, no conclusive evidence that a resurrection occurred.

The accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus are, as we have already seen, both late in date and very contradictory. They are none of them first-hand evidence of eye-witnesses, but are only evidence of an earlier tradition. We have seen that such traditions often and easily arose, not only in those days, but in more modern times also.

A groundless rumour, an illusion or hallucination, some misunderstandings or misinterpretations of a religious rite, and a little credulity have frequently convinced intelligent but unscientific men that all kinds of miraculous occurrences—including resurrections of dead men—have really taken place. For hundreds of years men were, by their upbringing, pre-disposed to credit stories of such occurrences, and very indisposed to require any adequate testimony to them before they believed.

A rumour and some religious excitement sufficed to make such a story spread quickly, and wherever it spread it would be unhesitatingly accepted. Somebody says that somebody else has seen him who was dead alive and

[1] This difficulty occurred, as we have already seen, in the case of Osiris as well as in the stories of people other than gods, to which we are now referring.

walking about. Some one even believes, or after conversation with some one else begins to believe, that he has seen his master or friend. As the rumour spreads it also grows. Details are added, and years after some author collects together these details, adds whatever he fancies will give verisimilitude to the story in which he himself believes, and publishes a biography or a gospel.

In that congenial soil, the cradle of religions, the birthplace of myths; in that generation, the age of legend and exaggeration; there is nothing strange in such an evolution of a story. It was a normal process, which had gone on before, and would go on again. It was not deliberate deception, but the in-those-days usual method of historical development. This is the natural and rational explanation of what occurred, and is, therefore, far more likely to be the true explanation of the birth and growth of the story than the orthodox supernatural explanation. It is an explanation which fits in with all the known facts, whereas the orthodox explanation does not do so. The latter has but one advantage over the former, for this does not hold out those hopes which men are so eager to grasp that they will believe any story, however improbable, which does claim to hold them out. It does not give any grounds for the statement that, since One rose from the dead, all shall one day do so. But the fact that a story is a pleasant one to believe is not a reasonable cause for believing it. It is mere self-delusion to believe anything on such grounds as that, and on no other grounds. It is grossly dishonest to appeal to men's emotions—and those not the highest—for the purpose of making them believe something which is not true, and which those who make the appeal know is not true. For, as we shall see later, many of those who periodically affirm their belief that "the third day he rose again from the dead" do not really believe anything of the kind.[1]

[1] See Chapter VI.

Chapter III

THE DESCENT INTO HELL

The words "He descended into Hell" were not inserted into the so-called Apostles' Creed until some time after the year 600 A.D. They are not to be found in any of the ancient creeds quoted by the Fathers of the Church; neither is the fact they allege to be found recorded in any of our Canonical Gospels.

In the first Epistle General of Peter it is said that Christ "went and preached unto the spirits in prison," evidently meaning that He descended into Hell;[1] but the doctrine in this Epistle is very different from that taught in the Gospels, as its author implies not a bodily resurrection, but a quickening by the Spirit: "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." This passage and a text about descending "into the lower parts of the earth"[2] are the only words in the New Testament which might refer to a descent into Hell. If the authors of the Canonical Gospels knew that Jesus had, between the time of His death and His resurrection, descended into this Hell which men of those times believed to be situated underneath the ground they trod on, surely they would have mentioned it. But in none of our four Gospels is there any reference whatever to this extraordinary event.

The only authority for this Article of Faith to which every clergyman of the Church of England must subscribe[3] is apocryphal. It is upon the authority of those whom the Church itself labels as unreliable that the Church accepts, and compels its clergy to accept, this doctrine of a descent into Hell.

[1] 1 Peter iii, 19. [2] Ephesians iv, 9–10.
[3] See "Articles of Religion" (The Thirty-Nine Articles), number 3.

The story of the descent of Jesus into Hell is related in the gospel of Nicodemus. In that very late work we are told the names of two of those who were raised from their graves at the same time as Jesus rose from the dead.[1] These men, Charinus and Lenthius, relate at some length their experiences in Hell. In the course of their story[2] they describe how "Satan, the Prince and Captain of Death," converses with Beelzebub, "the Prince of Hell," about the expected arrival of Jesus. They discuss who He is, and the Prince of Hell says: "Perhaps it is the same who took away from me Lazarus, after he had been four days dead, and did both stink and was rotten, and of whom I had possession as a dead person, yet he brought him to life again by his power." Finally they agree that He must be Almighty God.

Then "the King of Glory" in the form of a man arrives amid sounds of thunder, seizes Beelzebub and deprives him of his power; and Beelzebub upbraids Satan for crucifying Jesus and bringing about all this trouble. Eventually Jesus takes Adam by the hand, and, followed by all the saints, ascends from Hell; and the archangel Michael takes the party on to Heaven, where they meet "two very ancient men" who turn out to be Enoch and Elijah, who, having ascended direct to Heaven, have never been in Hell with the other saints. There also they meet the thief who had been crucified with Jesus, and had received from Him directions as to how he should go direct to Paradise. After relating these events Charinus and Lenthius explained how they themselves, and the others who had been raised from the dead at the same time as Jesus, had been ordered to return to earth for three days to celebrate the Passover, to testify to Christ, and to be baptized in the Jordan. As soon as Charinus and

[1] Presumably the same persons who, according to Matthew (xxvii. 53), rose from their graves at the moment when Jesus died. For the purpose of Nicodemus's story that would be too early, so these resurrections are postponed for two days.

[2] Nicodemus, chapters xiii–xxi.

Lenthius had written these words "they were changed into exceeding white forms and were seen no more." Their writings, which had been separately made, were compared and found to tally exactly, "the one not containing one letter more or less than another." Many other strange things are recorded in this gospel which Pilate is said to have written down, and which the emperor Theodosius the Great is said to have found among the public records in Jerusalem.[1]

Badly written farrago of absurdities though it is, it is worth studying as the story upon which one phase of our present Christian creed is founded, and as an example of the theological conceptions of that fourth century to which we are indebted for the Trinitarian doctrine as well as for this doctrine of the descent into Hell. This episode from an apocryphal and very late work was, as we have already seen, incorporated into orthodox Christian doctrine and made part of the creeds at some date after the year 600. But long before that date it was doubtless accepted by many Christians as historical.

A corresponding episode formed part of the stories told of very many gods and mythical heroes, and the Christians of the third and fourth centuries were not likely to permit it to be said that other gods had done anything divine which Jesus had not also done. The Babylonian goddess Ishtar was said to have descended into Hades to search for Tammuz and give him the water of life to drink.[2] An Egyptian king, Rhampsinitus,[3] was said to have descended into Amenti (the Egyptian Hell) and returned to earth again. Herodotus relates that in his own days the Egyptians still celebrated by an annual festival the return of this Pharoah from Hades.

[1] The gospel of Nicodemus is also known as "The Acts of Pilate."

[2] At every gate through which Ishtar had to pass on her way to the innermost recesses of Hell the janitor demanded a portion of her robe, so that the goddess arrived at the end of her journey in a state of complete nudity. Doubtless by this story it was intended to signify that the material body had to be entirely discarded before a person could visit the abode of spirits.

[3] Rameses (?).

The Egyptian god Osiris was believed to have descended into Hell; and the same story formed part of the myths connected with the Persian god, Mithra. Through these two gods the origin of this myth can perhaps be traced, as they both seem to have originally been sun-gods, though eventually they evolved into man-gods. The sun, apparently sinking beneath the world every evening, was thought to descend into Hell, whence he rose again—his resurrection from the dead—every morning. Dionysos too was said to have descended into Hell, between the time of his death and that of his resurrection, for the purpose of rescuing his mother Semele and taking her to Heaven with him; and Hermes was sent by Zeus to find Persephone in Hades.

A pretty myth related by many Greek and Latin authors tells how Orpheus descended into Hell to fetch back his wife Eurydice, who had died of a snake bite. He induced Pluto, the ruler of Hades, to allow Eurydice to return with him, but only on condition that he never looked back until he reached his home. Unfortunately, Orpheus before he reached home turned round to look at his beloved wife, who, therefore, had to return once more to Hell. The disconsolate widower was so constant to the memory of his wife that the Mænads, infuriated by his indifference to their charms, tore him to pieces.

The myths related about Hercules were less elegant. As his twelfth labour, he was said to have descended into Hell, and to have brought back Cerberus from that unpleasant resort. Theseus descended into Hell, and lived there for four years before he returned to earth! His friend Pirithous, who had gone there with him, remained behind; but Hercules rescued Theseus from the rock "chair of forgetfulness," to which he had grown so firmly attached that part of his person was left behind in it.

A pleasanter tale relates how Alcestis, who had volun-

tarily died as a substitute for her husband Admetus, was sent back to her husband from Hell by Persephone.

Proserpine descended into Hell and rose again on the third day ;[1] and Psyche went to Hell to fetch some of Proserpine's beauty for Venus, whose good looks had suffered from sorrowing for her son Cupid, who had met with an injury.[2]

Ulysses during his wanderings visited the abode of the dead. Æneas descended into Hell to consult his father Anchises. Adonis was also reputed to have visited Hell. Even in Scandinavia the myth was to be found, as Balder, their hero and god, was said to have descended into Hell.

The Nazoræans or Sabæans, a Christian sect,[3] which in small numbers still survives near Basra, relate that Hibil Ziva descended into Hell to wage war against the Devil and to rescue the spirits of the damned. And in India we find not only a similar myth, but also a detail very closely resembling a detail described in the gospel of Nicodemus. In that gospel it is stated that among the saints whom Jesus led out of Hell were two boys, sons of the High Priest, whom He did not send like the others on to Heaven in charge of the archangel Michael, but restored to life on earth. So, too, did Krishna retrieve two boys from the infernal regions and restore them to their sorrowing parents on earth. Whether "Nicodemus" borrowed from the Krishna story, or whether both are

[1] See *ante*, Chapter II.

[2] See Apuleius, "The Golden Ass," book v, chapter xxii. Those who are interested in the inter-action between folk-lore and mythology should study the old woman's story of the marriage of Cupid and Psyche, for here we have one of the last classical stories of a visit to Hell and perhaps also the germ of the Cinderella type of stories, written in the second century of our era. In the Introduction to his "Macrobius," Mr. Whittaker points out a curious allegorical forecast to be found in this story.

[3] Their Christianity is of a Gnostic type, as their Christ is an æon named Manda D'Hayyi (whence they are often called Mandæans), who was incarnate on more than one occasion, principally in the person of Hibil, and lastly in the person of John the Baptist (whence another of their names—viz., St. John's Christians). Their scriptures are written in an Aramaic dialect, and closely connected with the Jewish Old Testament, though also showing traces of Zoroastrian influences.

founded upon some still earlier story, we cannot tell; but we do know that the Krishna stories were in existence before the gospel of Nicodemus was written.

In another Indian story a Bodhisattva who rejoiced in the name Avalokiteswara is said to have descended into the hell Aviti. And, according to the Chinese legend, the Buddha himself visited the place of the dead for the purpose of preaching to his mother. Another Chinese legend tells how Miao Shan, the virtuous daughter of Miao Chuang, after performing many miracles on earth, descended into Hell, and by her prayers to the Master of Heaven transformed the infernal regions themselves into a paradise.[1]

Most men regarded these stories, or, at any rate, the particular story of this kind which formed part of their hereditary belief, as an historical and literal fact; but the wise men of old times regarded them as allegories. They recognized that man cannot reach Heaven without first visiting Hell, but also that neither the Heaven nor the Hell was an actual place. Heaven and Hell they knew to be states of mind—spiritual conceptions, not material perceptions. He who reaches the highest spiritual life must first have sounded the depths of misery. Heaven and Hell are contrasts—peace and despair, joys and torments. The quietist who has never sunk below the surface of life will never soar above it. The contented, self-satisfied individual who has never suffered from ill-health and never known the trials of poverty must have his materialism burnt away by fire, must plumb the depths of despair, before he learns his own insignificance and rises to the heights of a spiritual life. He must descend into Hell before he ascends into Heaven, or he must spend three days and three nights in the belly of the whale and be vomited up to land again, before he realizes that life is not mere holiday-making.

[1] See "Myths and Legends of China," by E. F. Chalmers Werner, H.B.M.'s Consul at Foochow.

But the materialists, whose reign is seldom interrupted for long, pride themselves upon being plain folk who take all things literally. The meaning of allegories is lost upon them; Hell-fire is like the fire on their hearths, Heaven is like a royal concert hall. The founders of their respective religions, so they think, burrowed through the earth, and wandered in the midst of the flames of an everlasting furnace; and then, uninjured, soared beyond the skies to some material abode above the earth. A fairy tale simpler to accept without thought than a disquieting moral allegory. These matter-of-fact people will believe any fiction so long as it does not disturb their self-satisfaction and their habits of life. People believe this particular statement—that Jesus "descended into Hell"—only because whenever they go to church they hear the fact asserted, and have never troubled to inquire upon what authority or when the statement was first made. The statement does not seriously disturb them, and so they are prepared to accept it as true without making any effort to examine the evidence for or against its occurrence; and this is so in spite of the fact that most of them smile sceptically at the idea of a Hell which is in the lower parts of the earth, like the Hell into which Jesus is supposed to have descended.

Chapter IV

THE ASCENSION

The story that Jesus was actually seen to rise in the air,[1] disappear into a cloud, and thus ascend to Heaven in His human body, is told only by Luke.

Having announced that Jesus had risen from the dead, the evangelists would, in any age when men were inclined critically to examine statements of a miraculous nature, have been asked: "Is He then still alive, or did He subsequently again die?" And, expecting so obvious a question, the authors of the Gospel stories would have considered it necessary to inform their readers of the ultimate fate of Jesus. Of all the great historical characters the final departure from the world is at any rate mentioned, even if it is not fully described by their biographers.

Yet Matthew makes no mention of what eventually happened to the risen Jesus; Mark casually mentions that, "after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into Heaven and sat on the right hand of God";[2] and John tells us nothing whatever about His final disappearance, though he quotes Jesus as referring immediately after His first appearance—that to Mary Magdalene—to His future ascension.[3]

That Matthew should say nothing about the ultimate death or disappearance of Jesus might be explained by the theory that the author of that Gospel regarded the

[1] "To be taken up" and "to be carried up" are the terms used. These imply angelic or some other conveyance, but in art and in tradition Jesus is represented as floating unassisted up into the clouds.

[2] Mark xvi, 19. This is the pseudo-Mark, apparently following—as he does in his account of the appearances—a vague rumour of some Lucan tradition.

[3] John xx, 17.

two appearances which he records as mere visions or subjective illusions; but that John, who emphasized the bodily nature of the risen Lord, should give no account of His eventual fate is very remarkable.[1] However, this unique event is unknown to, or at any rate passed over in silence by, Matthew, Mark,[2] and John; and is only described by Luke. Matthew and John—traditionally disciples, and therefore traditionally among the eleven who, according to Luke, witnessed the Ascension—omit to mention this stupendous event. Peter apparently forgot to mention it to his interpreter Mark, or Mark forgot Peter's description of it. Luke alone describes it, though Luke was not an eye-witness, and only got his information about Jesus from Paul, who certainly was not present—who, in fact, himself informs us that he never saw Jesus in the flesh, and who never himself mentions the Ascension in any of his writings.[3]

[1] Paley and other apologists, referring to this strange omission of the Ascension from the stories of all the evangelists save Luke, lay stress upon allusions made or supposed to be made by them to this event. John iii, 13, vi, 62, and xx, 17 are quoted as allusions which prove a knowledge of the event. But these allusions—especially that in John iii, 13, which describes Jesus as talking to his disciples of the "Son of Man which is in Heaven" having been the only man who ever ascended to Heaven, are cryptic and valueless as evidence of the occurrence of the subsequent event, though they may bear witness to the existence of a story about it. That the author of John, if he knew any details and not only a vague rumour, should not describe so important an event is incredible. And as the phrase "ascended into Heaven" might appear to his readers to refer to the usual destiny of every good man's soul, these texts do not prove that the author of this Gospel had ever heard a rumour about a bodily ascension. The question debated by those Jews who believed in the immortality of the soul was whether the souls of the dead went straight to Heaven or awaited some future general ascension.

[2] Except for the bald statement that He "was received up into Heaven," which might be applied to an ordinary death, and is at any rate no description of a bodily ascension.

[3] The silence of St. Paul is very strange if he had ever heard of this event, and he could hardly not have heard of it if it really took place. Somewhere in his list of resurrection appearances one would expect to find this disappearance mentioned. Surely, if he knew how the Founder of his religion, his Lord and Master, the Christ whom he preached, permanently left the earth, he would have told us about it! And more especially so when the manner of leaving was so remarkable and noteworthy! Surely, if he had heard this story of Luke's, he would have explained to us how it was that Jesus appeared to himself two years or more after He had ascended into Heaven. There is but one explanation of this silence. Paul had

Even if Luke was mistaken, and Matthew, who states that Jesus appeared to his disciples in Galilee, was not present at Bethany, near Jerusalem, where Luke says that the event took place in the presence of the eleven, it is strange that he (Matthew) should never mention it.[1] Presumably he would hear of this culminating event in the life of Jesus, and would not refrain from mentioning it because he did not like to confess that he had missed so great a spectacle! And the silence of the other chroniclers is just as astounding unless they were ignorant of the event. However, it is Luke alone who describes the Ascension, that culminating event which would of all other evidence be the most conclusive of the supernatural nature of Jesus and of His bodily resurrection. In his Gospel he merely states that He "was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven"[2]—a rather curt description of an event so unique; but in the Acts he states that He "was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight"; and, further, tells us that two men in white apparel appeared, and announced that Jesus would return in the same manner as he had gone away.[3]

In his gospel Luke implies that the Ascension took place either on the Sunday night or the Monday morning, within a few hours of the Resurrection; but in the Acts he states that it took place forty days after the Resurrection, and that period of time[4] was the usually accepted tradition,

never heard of this event, first related so long after he was dead; and if he had heard it would not have believed it, as to him (see Chapter I) the appearances were visions and the Resurrection not a resurrection of a body.

[1] Moreover, in Acts, where forty days' interval is allowed, it is stated that people came from Galilee to Jerusalem to witness this event (xiii, 31).

[2] Luke xxiv, 51. In some ancient manuscripts of Luke the words "and carried up into Heaven, and they worshipped him" are not to be found, and the passage reads "He parted from them. And they returned to Jerusalem." If this was the original reading, it was only in the Acts that the Ascension was originally mentioned.

[3] Acts i, 9-11. When Luke wrote "his former treatise" he apparently did not know of, or forgot to mention, this incident.

[4] Forty days is the usual period specified in the Bible for notable episodes. Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai conversing with God; Ezra was occupied for forty days in dictating the Old Testament books; Jesus fasted for forty days in the wilderness; etc.

though some Christians believed that Jesus remained on earth for eighteen months after His Resurrection, others —more meticulously accurate—that He remained for 545 days,[1] others specified ten years, others eleven years, others twelve years,[2] and others that He remained yet longer periods on earth.[3]

But leaving aside for the moment these now unorthodox beliefs, and referring only to Luke's own accounts, how can we reconcile the two periods, one of less than forty-eight hours and the other of forty days? Even if we take the forty days to be loosely used for some period of time consisting of a few weeks, and do not haggle over the exact number of days, there is too great a difference between about one day and about forty to be bridged by any theory of slight exaggeration or carelessness.

The shorter period implied in Luke's Gospel corresponds with what we read in the very early, but now classed as "apocryphal," epistle of Barnabas, in which the Ascension is said to have taken place on the same day as the Resurrection; but it is quite incompatible with John's account of the appearance to Thomas and the other disciples eight days after the appearance to the disciples without Thomas,[4]

[1] Valentinus and some other Gnostics stated that He remained on earth for 545 days between His Resurrection and Ascension. (See Charles, "Ascension of Isaiah," p. 63, note.)

[2] Twelve years was the accepted period in many Gnostic circles—twelve being one of the especially sacred numbers.

[3] According to Irenæus (if the Latin version can be relied upon), who claimed to have had his information from those "who met with John the Disciple of the Lord in Asia," Jesus was crucified at the end of the thirtieth year of His age, His ministry having lasted one year; but He lived after His resurrection for another ten or twenty years, and taught His disciples during that time. Among the other questions which arise out of this statement made by a "Father of the Church" who lived from 147–202 A.D. are two which concern us now. In the first place, could Irenæus have been acquainted with our Canonical Gospels when he made it? In the second, could the authors of those Gospels have known anything about this long post-Resurrection ministry and yet made no mention of it? Both these questions, it seems, can be answered only in the negative. In the second century, it appears, many traditions were afloat, and the versions given in our four Canonical Gospels had not yet been preferred to the others.

[4] To say nothing of the subsequent appearances implied in John xx, 30, and the one described in the Appendix (chapter xxi).

and with Paul's list of six appearances, of which the last could not have taken place until at least two years later. Matthew is ambiguous, but the last appearance which he mentions could hardly have taken place on the same day as the Resurrection, and was in Galilee, whereas Luke states that the Ascension took place at Bethany just outside Jerusalem.

In the gospel of Peter it is stated[1] that Jesus ascended to Heaven straight from the grave, and did not spend even the Resurrection day on earth.

Another "apocryphal" gospel mentions this event, but gives no details of it. In the gospel of Nicodemus we are told that three Jews—a priest, a schoolmaster, and a Levite—arrived from Galilee and told the chief priests in Jerusalem ".....we have seen him ascending up to Heaven ....." This account is noteworthy because, according to it, the Ascension took place in Galilee and not at Bethany outside Jerusalem; and also because the bribery theme, which we have before discussed when considering Matthew's story of the empty tomb, is again introduced, as it is stated that the three Jews were given a large sum of money on the understanding that they would never again mention the matter.

When Nicodemus was written it was doubtless thought desirable to explain how it was that an event so striking and so important, the fame of which would necessarily have spread throughout Syria and Asia Minor, was unmentioned by the Jewish historian Josephus, or by any of the Roman historians such as Seneca and Pliny, who made a practice of recording all the marvellous events which occurred in any part of the Roman Empire. For a conspiracy of silence would not be formed by men of all nations and of all religions and no religion, and such events as a mid-day Ascension on the outskirts of Jerusalem do not take place unseen by any one except

[1] See Chapter I.

those who, for some unimaginable reasons, keep them secret.

However, on the details of the Ascension the gospel of Nicodemus gives us no further information than the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. So we must rest content with Luke's statement that Jesus "was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight," as that is the fullest and longest description we have of the Ascension.

In former times, when ignorance of facts was considered no bar to speculation, men did not rest content. Accounts have come down to us of the discussions held by medieval "schoolmen" to decide whether Jesus appeared after His resurrection and at His ascension with His clothes on or naked. To us, whatever we profess to believe, or even if we disbelieve in the Ascension, it seems irreverent or absurd to debate whether Jesus ascended into Heaven clothed or naked; but to the learned theologians of the Middle Ages the question was of extreme interest and importance. They understood that there was considerable difficulty in accounting for the ascension into Heaven of human garments, but they also felt that there was some irreverence in the idea of a naked Christ. No authoritative decision seems to have been arrived at or laid down upon this point, which is hardly surprising considering the difficulty of reconciling spiritual and material ideas on such matters.[1]

[1] Semi-orthodox apologists often attempt to rationalize the Resurrection stories by interpreting them as ghostly appearances; but they should realize that in all ghost stories the teller is confronted with the difficulty of explaining away the garments said to be worn by the apparition. The teller of a ghost story—if he believes the tale he narrates—alleges that the spirit of a dead man has an objective reality, and implies, though he does not explicitly allege, that the garments once worn by the departed also possess spirits which accompany their late owner and are manifested with him. Uncivilized man, and also, it appears, the modern Spiritualists, believe that clothes have souls which accompany their owners to another sphere. Savages often place food and raiment in the graves of the dead. Sir Oliver Lodge has learnt that the departed drink, in the abode of the dead, ghostly whisky and spiritual soda water! Some of the theosophists believe in an elaborate system of spiritual chemistry—a chemistry of the refined essences of matter! But those who thus confuse matter and spirit have never, in spite of all their ingenuity, been able to make their theories

But to men who believed that the earth was the centre of the universe, Heaven a place immediately above the earth, and God a Being made in the shape of man, the idea of an ascension presented comparatively few difficulties. With the collapse of the geocentric theory, the idea of an ascent into Heaven became more difficult to form, even in the minds of men who were ready to believe in a body which defied the laws of gravitation and was exempt from the ordinary processes of corruption.[1]

By men of the earliest Christian epoch, stories about levitation, spiriting away, and ascensions were accepted without hesitation. Such stories are related in the books of our Bible and in other ancient books as the most natural of

credible or even comprehensible to those who keep clearly in mind the conditions under which objective vision is possible. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones," still less has it a hat, a coat, and some boots, or the jangling chains which once bound its body to a dungeon wall!

[1] The ancients who related stories of ascensions had, of course, no idea of the immense distances between the earth and the stars, nor of the force of gravitation. Now we know that any body enabled to overcome the gravity of the earth itself and to rise from its surface would be attracted to the sun, wherein it would inevitably be consumed. We also know that a body which was enabled both to leave the surface of the earth and to avoid the attraction of the sun would, if it travelled at the rate of ten miles an hour day and night without any cessation, take millions of years to reach the nearest of the fixed stars, and an incalculable number of millions of years to reach the furthest stars revealed to us by powerful telescopes. Luke's account of the disciples looking steadfastly towards Heaven as Jesus went up does not imply great velocity of ascension; but even if the body of Jesus ascended at the pace of an express train He would even now not yet be approaching the nearest of the fixed stars. One is loth to treat with ridicule a story which many people regard with reverence, but it is necessary, if one is to explain the reasons for its rejection by all educated men, to point out some of the grossest of the absurdities which it involves. The following approximate round figures may be of interest as a rough guide to the distances and times from which calculations can be made: (1) Velocity of light, about 186,000 miles per second; (2) Mean distance of the sun from the earth, about 93,000,000 miles; (3) Time light takes to travel from the sun to the earth, about eight minutes, twenty seconds; (4) Time light takes to travel from the nearest fixed star (proxima centauri) to the earth, over three years; (5) Time light takes to travel from many of the fixed stars to the earth, over 1,000 years; (6) Approximate distance in miles of nearest fixed star to the earth, 22,000,000,000,000; (7) At fifty miles an hour ceaseless travelling day and night, year in year out, it would take more than fifty million years to cover this distance; (8) At the same rate it would take more than a thousand times fifty million years to reach some of the visible stars, and there is every reason to believe that there are still further, at present invisible, stars.

events, calling for no comments or expressions of surprise, still less, of course, for any detailed analysis of the actual occurrences.

In the Acts, for example, we are casually informed that "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip," and that the said Philip "was found at Azotus."[1] No further details are vouchsafed to us of the manner of his sudden disappearance, or of his re-appearance at a place some thirty miles or more away.[2] We cannot complain, because the now ubiquitous reporter was not present to interview the airman on his arrival at Azotus; but we can affirm that, unless the contemporaries of the author of the Acts were known to be quite ready to accept such stories without making any attempt to verify them, we would have been told something more of the experiences of one who thus found himself invisibly transferred from one place to another far distant one.

And, in addition to such stories of men becoming invisible and being suddenly transported from one place to another, a study of canonical, apocryphal, and pagan literature discloses the fact that stories of ascensions were, like stories of all other miraculous events, comparatively common in ancient times. To rise from the dead and ascend bodily to Heaven, or to ascend to Heaven without previously dying, was not even regarded as possible only to divine beings. Many human beings were said to have so ascended, and in the eyes of men who lived in those ages such a miracle was a sign only of great favour from God, and not necessarily of the godship of the person thus translated alive to Heaven.

The patriarch Enoch, seventh in descent from Adam, after living 365 years, was translated to Heaven. In the Book of Genesis this event is only briefly alluded to, but in other parts of the Bible, even of the New Testament,

[1] Acts viii, 39–40.

[2] On the assumption that Azotus = Ashdod, and that Philip was somewhere between Jerusalem and Gaza when he thus disappeared.

it is more definitely mentioned.[1] And in an apocryphal book it is not only stated that Enoch ascended to Heaven without dying, but also that he had previously visited Heaven during his lifetime.[2]

The prophet Elijah "went up by a whirlwind into Heaven" before the eyes of his disciple and successor Elisha.[3] It is not quite clear whether he was borne aloft in the "chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire" which appeared to the prophets, or whether the function of these was merely to separate master and pupil.

Of the prophet Ezra, the leader of the Jews on their return from exile, and the author who dictated the books of the Old Testament and seventy other books as well in the short space of forty days, it is related that on the conclusion of his life's work he ascended to Heaven without first tasting death. Though it was not the orthodox opinion, many Jews believed that Moses, whose burial place had never been known,[4] really ascended to Heaven without dying.

In a late uncanonical work, "The Ascension of Isaiah," we read of that prophet's visit to Heaven during his lifetime, and of all that he saw and heard there. It tells of Isaiah being wafted to "the seventh Heaven," and of his initiation into the heavenly "mysteries." But Isaiah did not remain in Heaven; he returned to earth, and eventually met with a most unpleasant death. It was reported to the King of Israel, from whom the prophet was fleeing, that Isaiah had been seen to conceal himself in a hollow tree. Hezekiah immediately ordered the tree to be cut down and sawn in half, and this was done while the prophet still remained in it. So Isaiah was sawn into two pieces and died.

Thus, among the Jews of the pre-Christian era, we find that the idea of an ascension to Heaven, either as a final exit from the world or as an episode in the life of an historical character, was already familiar. And of men

[1] E.g., Hebrews xi, 5.
[2] Book of the Secrets of Enoch.
[3] 2 Kings ii, 11.
[4] Deuteronomy xxxiv, 6.

who lived at the very dawn of the Christian era stories of their ascensions were also told.

Apollonius of Tyana, who lived in the first century A.D., was subsequently said to have ascended into Heaven without dying, after having during his lifetime performed the most wonderful miracles.[1] He, according to Philostratus, entered the temple of Athene, the gates were closed, and the sage ascended to Heaven to the strains of a divine hymn—"Come, come, to Heaven come"—sung by voices that sounded like those of maidens. It was said that on a few occasions he appeared again on earth to some of his disciples.

It was reported that Simon Magus ascended to Heaven in the presence of the Emperor Nero and an immense concourse of people assembled on the Campus Martius to witness the spectacle; but others related that, though Simon attempted to perform this miracle, or some aeronautical feat resembling it, he failed and perished miserably.[2]

[1] Christian authors of the third century never doubted that Apollonius had actually worked miracles, but only attempted to minimize them by asserting that they were performed by the aid of demons.

[2] According to the Acts of Peter, Simon fell on the Via Sacra, and his body was broken into four pieces. It is related in these Acts that this event took place as the culmination of a dispute between Simon Magus on the one hand and Peter and Paul on the other, and that it was preceded by various miracles which are described, including the resurrection of Simon from the dead after he had been beheaded. It is explained how this last "miracle" was really performed by the secret substitution of a ram for Simon just before the beheading took place. The story goes on to relate how Nero caused Paul to be beheaded and Peter to be crucified head downwards, as accessories before the fact to Simon's "suicide." Thence the tumult of the Christians, and thence their persecution by Nero. So runs this strange apocrypha, which is worthy of notice only as an example of the curious disputes and methods of controversy between Christians of the second century, and of the difficulty of disentangling facts from fiction. For Suetonius records an attempt made by some unnamed, aspiring pioneer of aeronautics to fly from the Campus Martius in the presence of Nero; and some Christians identified Simon Magus with Paul, while others regarded Simon as a rival of Paul's; and yet others regarded him as a competitor of Jesus. Doubtless most, if not indeed all, of the stories about Simon are deliberate fiction; and, most likely, Suetonius was only repeating a yarn which he had heard somewhere or other at second or third hand. But the story is also of interest because it is on the authority of this late apocryphal work that the tradition arose of the manner in which Peter and Paul met their deaths. Had the manner of their dying been known to

However, this legend or myth about Simon Magus probably arose in the course of some wordy warfare between those who maintained that only Jesus had performed wonderful miracles and those who maintained that one Simon Magus had also done the same, or had really been the only one to do so. The story about Simon ascending to Heaven was very probably founded upon, and an imitation of, the story that Jesus had done so,[1] and the orthodox Christians retorted, not as we would do with a request for some evidence that the story was true, but with a new story to the effect that the fatuous Simon was so poor a miracle-monger that when he attempted to perform this ascension he only rose a short distance in the air and then fell heavily back to the ground. So the story, whatever its origin, is of no great importance as evidence of a generally held belief in such events as ascensions; and we will now turn our attention to older and undoubtedly pre-Christian stories of ascensions, beginning with those of the contemporary pagan gods.

The very popular Greek god Dionysos, who had been worshipped for centuries before the birth of Christianity and was still worshipped during the first few centuries of the Christian era, was said to have descended into Hell to fetch back his mother Semele from the dead, and, after bringing her back, to have ascended into Heaven. These events were dramatically represented yearly at the Dionysian festivals which were well known in Asia Minor at the beginning of the Christian era.

Mithra, the celebrated Persian God who was worshipped by a large number of Roman soldiers, was represented in

the author of the Acts of the Apostles, he would presumably have given an account of these events, but in no canonical work are we told anything about the deaths of these two apostles. However, we are not at present concerned with the growth of the legends about Peter and Paul.

[1] Simon, before his attempted ascension, is said to have used the words: "Behold, I go to the Father.....I will prepare a seat for you at the foot of my throne.....Verily, verily, I say unto you, whoso believeth in me shall not see death; for in me is eternal life.....," and other expressions corresponding closely with texts found in our Gospels.

myth and in sculpture driving away to Heaven in the chariot of the sun god—Mithra himself being regarded as the Mediator between mankind and the Supreme God. The great Egyptian god, Osiris, after his death ascended to Heaven by means of a ladder, which was divinely manufactured and set up in its proper place by Horus and another god.[1]

Adonis, after his resurrection from the dead, was believed to have ascended to Heaven in the presence of his followers; and a Latin author[2] states that this ascension was annually enacted at the springtime festivals held in honour of the Syrian god. By some conjuring device such as is common in the East, such an ascension might, having regard to the emotional excitement of the worshippers, easily be simulated. That ascensions were actually represented by some means or other at the rites held in honour of Dionysos and Adonis is well authenticated.

Hercules, incarnate God as well as human hero, was said to have ascended into Heaven (Olympus) from his funeral pyre, after having previously descended into Hell (Hades). Doubtless in this case the idea was that the fire burnt away his earthly body and left his spiritual body free to ascend to the gods; but the myth only states that "a cloud passed under Hercules, and, with a peal of thunder, wafted him up to Heaven."[3] In the drama "Hercules Œtaeus," attributed to Seneca, Alcmena, the mother of Hercules, is represented first as the sorrowing and then as the triumphant mother of the dead and of the ascended demi-god.

Asclepius, god of healing and father of medicine, was said to have ascended to Heaven in a column of fire. Œdipus was believed to have been carried off to Heaven by the gods, though no man saw him go or heard his

[1] See Budge's "Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection," vol. i, for details of this story.
[2] Lucian.
[3] Apollodorus, "The Library," ii, vii, 7. See Frazer's translation.

going. It was believed by many that Empedocles never died but ascended direct to Heaven, though others related that he had leapt into the crater of Etna so as to disappear, and thus create the legend of a translation to Heaven.

Romulus was said never to have died, but to have been, during an eclipse of the sun, carried up in a fiery chariot to Heaven by his father, the god Mars.[1] However preposterous such a story may seem to us, it was for hundreds of years believed by all men—even by the well-educated. Even in the eighteenth century many classical scholars still credited this tale. "Infatuated by the love of antiquity, they would listen to nothing that diminished the reputation of its history."[2] We, too, are still loath to part with the fables learnt in our youth, and in our hearts connected with much that we still cherish; but we ought to be consistent and unprejudiced in this as in other matters, and so, if we retain our beliefs in our own inherited fables, let us not deride the pagans and the infidels who retain theirs. Let us own that it is as sensible to believe in, say, Mohammed's visit to Heaven as in any other story of a like nature. For of Mohammed it is related that he ascended into Heaven while standing on the "Holy Rock of Jerusalem," which adhered to his feet throughout the journey. The footprints of the prophet and the fingermarks of the archangel Gabriel, who subsequently released him from the rock, are still pointed out, and "this is all the more wonderful because Mohammed never arrived at Jerusalem" at any time.[3]

[1] Mars ravished the virgin Sylvia, and by her became the father of Romulus and Remus, who, after being reared by a she-wolf, founded the city of Rome. Long after Romulus had been "translated alive to the mansions of celestial glory," he re-appeared in divine shape to one of the senators, and instructed him to order the Romans to worship him as the god Quirinus. So say the ancient historians.

[2] Buckle, "History of Civilization in England," vol. ii, chapter vi, p. 310 (1908 edition).

[3] Quotation is from Ardern Beaman's "Travels without Baedeker." The footprints of Jesus are still pointed out to the traveller in Palestine on Mount Olivet, on the spot where He is said to have taken off for His Ascension. This is another example of the results of religious competition, as these footprints were unseen until after the Moslems began to point out

Besides the story about Romulus, the Romans believed that Pollux had been carried up to Heaven by his father Zeus. These are stories of bodily ascensions. In later days more spiritual fictions took their place, for even in the pagan world stories were told of the unusual manner in which the souls of famous men were borne to the abodes of the blest, and great events were generally supposed to attend the deaths of the great. A comet which appeared in the year 44 B.C. was popularly supposed to have borne away the soul of Cæsar to the gods, and many other tales of similar purport have been told about the spirits of other great heroes or villains.[1] But these need not now be considered, as it is with bodily ascensions that we are at present concerned.[2]

Before the days of Rome, it was believed by the Greeks that Menelaus, the husband of that Helen who was the cause of the Trojan War, was made immortal and went to Heaven without first dying. There, in the Elysian fields, he rejoined his first wife, the daughter of the great god. And it was also related long before the Christian era that when Crœsus, King of Lydia, fearing to fall into the hands of Cyrus and the Median army, had mounted

those of their own prophet on a neighbouring site. However, it was not always necessary to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land if one wished to see this sacred footprint; for until the sixteenth century Westminster Abbey was the proud possessor of a "white marble stone with the print of our Lord's foot," which had been impressed upon it as Jesus quitted the earth at His Ascension. (See Canon Westlake's "Westminster Abbey: the Church, Convent, Cathedral, and College of St. Peter, Westminster.") But, of course, so holy a footprint found no difficulty in being in two or more places at one and the same time, and, of course, the favoured stone would become white marble! For some examples of other footprints of Jesus, of Mohammed, of the Buddha, of Adam, and of the Devil, which are still pointed out, see Maury, "Légendes Pieuses," pp. 214–16.

[1] A catalogue of the myths and misbeliefs of men about comets would fill a large book. Milton voiced the general illusion when he wrote that a comet "from its horrid hair shakes pestilence and war." One learned divine undertook to prove that it was really the tail of a comet which caused the earth to be overwhelmed by the Old Testament flood.

[2] Two hundred years after the alleged attempts to fly in the presence of Nero, to which we have already referred, stories were told of men who had flown up to Heaven in the presence of the Emperor Claudius; but these stories are apparently of attempts to conquer the air rather than of attempts to conquer or avoid death.

a funeral pyre and set fire to it, Zeus put out the fire, and Apollo carried off the Lydian King and his daughters to the Hyperborean country.[1] Semiramis, the Assyrian queen, was said to have left the earth and ascended to Heaven in the form of a dove.[2]

Further east, and earlier still, stories of the same kind were told. In the great Indian epic, the Mahabharata, it is related that Drona, the tutor of both the Pandavas and the Kurus, after being slain in the great battle between these cousins, went to Heaven in a blaze of glory like the sun.

And in the same epic there is another and more beautiful tale of the same nature. Yudhisthira, the eldest of the Pandava brothers, having climbed the great mountains (the Himalayas), meets on their summit the god Indra standing illuminated in his chariot, and is invited to enter the car and be conducted to Heaven. He refuses to leave his faithful dog, which animal cannot, however, be admitted to the abode of the gods. But as, in fairy tales, devotion to the poor and humble is rewarded by the discovery that they are really powerful beings in disguise, so it turns out that the dog is really Dharma, the god of Righteousness,[3] and Yudhisthira is rewarded for his fidelity to his humble follower by entering Heaven in the company of the god.

Yudhisthira, it is stated, was the only mortal to reach Heaven in the flesh without first dying. His brothers were admitted only after death, and some of the finest passages in the Mahabharata are those which describe Yudhisthira renouncing his own personal admission to

[1] Herodotus i, 85–7.

[2] Lucianus, "De Dea Syria," s. 14, 54, t. iii; and Diodorus Siculus, lib. ii, s. 20, t. i.

[3] An abstract virtue materialized for the occasion into a god. Dharma = the righteous conduct of life. Not a definite code for all men, but the virtues suitable to each man according to his situation in life—justice for the king, valour for the soldier, honesty for the tradesmen, devotion and fidelity for the servant, and so on. In many ways the finest ideal of pure Hinduism, disparaging lust of empire, ambition, greed, and selfishness.

Heaven, and even demanding to be sent to Hell, because he finds that his friends are all in the latter place. "It would be a sin to desert one's friends for the sake of one's own bliss"; and, moreover, it would be no pleasure to be in Heaven knowing they were in Hell.[1] He is then shown that his vision of Hell was an illusion, designed to test his fidelity to his friends, who, together with himself, are all finally admitted to Heaven.

Though Yudhisthira was the only mortal who thus entered Heaven without first dying, Krishna, the immortal man-god, also ascended without tasting death. Filling the whole sky with his glory, he ascended and passed through Indra's paradise to his own celestial mansion.

Sufficient examples have now been given to show that stories of ascensions to Heaven—sometimes temporary visits during lifetime, sometimes final departures without death, and sometimes after death—had often been told and believed long before the Christian era, and sometimes told and believed during the first few centuries of that era. It was long before such myth-making became a lost art. Gregory of Tours, in the second half of the sixth century, made known the *fact* that the Virgin Mary had herself ended her earthly career by ascending to Heaven; and the Greek Orthodox Church as well as the Roman Catholic Church still celebrate the "Assumption" of the Virgin Mary on every 15th of August, the anniversary of the supposed event.[2] As we approach modern

[1] In other forms and other words, the same moral lessons of fidelity to friends and devotion to the humble are taught in the Gospels; but these altruistic sentiments of the eldest Pandava are far loftier than the conceptions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Christian divines, who actually taught that one of the pleasures of Heaven would be to witness from a distance the torments going on in Hell, and thus to realize what one had escaped.

[2] This tradition can be traced back to Gregory of Tours, and no further, so the presumption that he invented the story is not entirely unwarranted; but it is possible that some less distinguished ecclesiastic was the actual inventor. Several Catholic theologians are at present agitating to have this ascension made an obligatory doctrine instead of merely an occasion, as it is at present, for a Church festival. Their principal argument is that it is extremely probable that the Mother of God would be superior to death.

days new stories of that kind become excessively rare. Of the saints vast numbers of miraculous doings are recorded, but of very few was it said, and of fewer still was it believed, that they had actually ascended into Heaven.

St. Ammon, we have it on the authority of the virtuous St. Anthony, who tells us that he himself witnessed the event—and surely St. Anthony would not lie—ascended through the skies to Heaven immediately after his death. And of St. Anthony himself some said that he ascended to Heaven. In the "Golden Book" written by Barthelmy we read that St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscan order of monks, ascended to Heaven in a chariot of fire.

However, though these stories were told and at one time believed, they had no such vogue as the older tales related above. They are now decently interred in various "Lives of the Saints," and if believed at all it is only by the most uneducated of the peasants in Latin countries.

Men and women still love the sensational, and popular newspapers are not restrained by any punctilious regard for accuracy when they pander to this taste; but, even when catering for the most credulous of modern clienteles, no one is likely nowadays to invent a new story of an ascension. Too many details are required by the inquisitive modern, and details are just what are lacking in all stories of ascensions.

The Christian may still continue mechanically to repeat that he believes that Jesus "ascended into Heaven," but he is not likely to believe that any one else did so; and he may one day feel sufficient curiosity about his religion to inquire upon what evidence that belief was originally founded.

We ought to sympathize with their desire to have an extremely probable fact enshrined among their doctrines, even though we cannot follow the theo-logic that leads them to the conclusion that this assumption is probable.

Chapter V

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Of all the doctrines enunciated in the creeds there is none of which it may be more confidently said that the affirmation differs from the real belief of most of the affirmers than that which states that the bodies of men will be raised from the dead. For every civilized man knows that after death the bodies of men, as of all other animals, are resolved into their component parts, and taken up into the structure of herbs and plants which are eaten by other creatures, who themselves become, either directly or indirectly, meals for other men, so that the material constituents of any individual body have belonged not only to the possessor of that body, but to many other men before him, and will belong to other men who come after him.

Yet it was taught and believed until quite recently, and it is still affirmed by all who repeat the Christian creeds, that all these chemical constituents of a man's body will be re-assembled at the universal resurrection of the dead, and re-formed into the original bodies, which will thereafter survive for all eternity; or, more wonderful still, that at the very time when we can see these bodies decaying in the earth they are also residing in Heaven or in Hell.[1]

When men recite the "Apostles' Creed" they affirm their belief in "the resurrection of the body"; when they recite "the creed of St. Athanasius" they affirm that

[1] For some believed, and quoted Scripture in support of their belief, that men appeared before the Heavenly judgment seat immediately after they died; though others believed, and also quoted Scripture in support of their belief, that the dead waited in their graves until the last trump sounded, and all rose together to be judged.

"all men shall rise again with their bodies"; and when the god-parents of a child answer for him or her at its baptism they affirm their belief in "the resurrection of the flesh." They sing "On the Resurrection morning, Soul and body meet again,"[1] and in many other ways reiterate their belief that they will one day rise from the dead with the bodies of flesh and blood which they now possess.

It is a remarkable testimony to the power of custom, and to the intellectual indifference which men and women exhibit to the meaning of the words they employ, that such phrases as these are repeated by thousands of persons who do not really believe that their bodies will ever rise again after they have been committed to the earth.

It is a remarkable testimony to man's capacity for self-deception that the bishops and clergy, believing themselves to remain honest men, still continue to use these ancient formulæ. For the bishops and the clergy know that dead bodies return to their original chemical elements through corruption in the earth or by fire in a crematorium, and that our bodies, with all their necessary functions, could not exist in an unlike sphere beyond the atmosphere of this globe; yet from thousands of pulpits and lecterns every Sunday they teach these ancient creeds as necessary to salvation.

In controversy they talk of a spiritual body, and quote St. Paul's words, "it is raised again a spiritual body," in support of their arguments. Why, then, cannot they openly state their position and amend their creeds accordingly? For, though they speak privately of this undefinable and meaningless concept, a spiritual body, they still affirm in their creeds that they believe in the resurrection of the body, meaning, and sometimes explicitly specifying, a body of flesh and blood—a "body with flesh,

[1] Hymn 499 (Ancient and Modern).

bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature." In the controversies of olden days it was repeatedly pointed out that the only body of which it could be said that it would be raised again was that body which had been buried; and those who did not believe that that body of flesh and blood would be raised again, but that men would receive a body of some other kind, used the words "resurrection of the dead" instead of the words "resurrection of the body," and were branded as heretics for so doing.[1]

That the words "the resurrection of the body" meant what they literally imply has been repeatedly emphasized, and, until the last few years, continually affirmed by all the great dignitaries of the Orthodox Christian Churches, both Catholic and Protestant. To retain the same phrase —including even the word "flesh" in one version—and yet in private controversy to pretend that it means something different, is mere quibbling, even if it is not deliberate dishonesty. For, apart from the fact that the words "spiritual body" are a meaningless contradiction—an antinomy recognized and emphasized by most of the Fathers of the Church and by all the authors of the New Testament save one—St. Paul's doctrine was from the very beginning of orthodox Christianity overridden by the doctrine of the "Fathers of the Church."

That doctrine, strongly emphasized by all orthodox Christians for more than 1,700 years, was that men would rise again in their bodies, and in those bodies enjoy a future life; that the saints who had while in the flesh suffered would in the flesh receive their reward. It was only those primitive Christian sects who were afterwards branded as heretical, and the more or less sceptical modern Christians, who ridiculed the bodily resurrection, and

[1] Even to teach that the tortures of Hell were really torments of conscience, and not actual burning and ill-treatment of material bodies, was repeatedly branded as heretical; and Popes declared that the memory of Origen ought to be regarded with hatred because that Father had supported the doctrine of a spiritual body.

who believed in an allegorical resurrection or a spiritual regeneration.[1]

Personal survival after death had been a subject of debate by Greek philosophers long before Christianity arose. Theories of an entirely speculative nature about human souls had been elaborated by Indian theologians long before the Jews had compiled our Old Testament. That death was not the end of man's personality and existence was not a doctrine of the Israelites, neither was it a doctrine which originated with the Christians. Until after their return from the captivity the Jews had no conception of a personal survival after death. They were contented, as noble men might be, with the thought that the names of good patriots would survive in the memory of their God and of their own descendants. The nation, not themselves as individuals, was foremost in their minds. But shortly before the time when Christianity arose the Pharisees began to believe in a bodily resurrection, though the Sadducees never did so.[2] The idea of a future life had been learnt from the Egyptians, the Indians, and the Greeks; and the Jews were divided in opinion as to whether it was true. The questions of

[1] The Gospel authors differ from each other in their ideas about the date of the resurrection. The author of John evidently considers that the dead shall rise again all together "at the last day," when the trump is heard and the graves give up their dead (e.g., John xi, 24); whereas the author of Luke apparently considers that the body goes straight to Heaven or to Hell immediately after death (e.g., Luke xvi, 22, 23; xxiii, 43). But the author of John is not altogether consistent in his teaching. The resurrection of which he speaks is sometimes figurative and spiritual, as the Gnostics taught. The real resurrection is the rising again of the spirit of Christianity from its long death-like sleep, to be once more a living force among men and women. But the two tendencies—the spiritual and the material—seem to be in conflict in the author's mind, and we sometimes find the purely material conception of bodies rising from the grave, and the eschatology that was gradually superseding, among the uneducated masses, the nobler and saner conceptions of the Gnostics (compare John xiv, 16–31 with John v, 28–9). Paul, as we all know, taught that the dead would remain in their graves until the second coming of Christ, when both they and the living would be "caught up" into the clouds (1 Thessalonians iv, 17 and 1 Corinthians xv, 52).

[2] Acts xxiii, 8: ".....the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both."

bodily survival and of an eternal soul had been debated among them for some time before the advent of Christianity. In some of the later books of the Old Testament we find the new doctrine stated. For example, in one of the latest we read the words[1]: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"; and in an earlier but also late book we read: "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"[2]—a text often quoted in those days, when it was said that every word in the Bible was inspired truth, as conclusive proof of a future resurrection of the flesh.

In the earliest books of the New Testament, the Epistles, we find the first Christian doctrine of man's survival of death—a very different doctrine from that which became orthodox when Catholicism triumphed over the rival Christian sects. Paul, as we have already seen,[3] taught that men would rise from the dead, though not in their natural bodies, but in new spiritual bodies. No one has ever yet explained what is meant by a spiritual body, and no one is ever likely to do so, as spirit and body are the very converse of each other, so that a spiritual body is a contradiction in terms. But, though Paul's actual doctrine was subsequently discarded by Christians in favour of the doctrine of a physical resurrection of the earthly body, one part of his argument must be noticed if we are to appreciate the Christian doctrine, as that part still holds a prominent place in orthodox liturgies.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."[4] So argues Paul in

[1] Daniel xii, 2. The Book of Daniel was almost certainly written in the middle of the second century B.C., about four hundred years after the events which it purports to describe.

[2] Job xix, 26. (Note: the text of Job is admittedly very corrupt and much interpolated.)

[3] Chapter I.

[4] 1 Corinthians xv, 21-2.

his discussion of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. To a Jew who believed, as all Jews did, that there had been no death on the earth until by his sin Adam brought death into the world, the argument is cogent, even though it is by no means conclusive. But we now know that it was not a man who brought death into the world. Death stalked on the face of the earth long ages before man appeared thereon, though the Jews of Paul's day did not know it, and believed that death was a punishment inflicted by God in revenge for the sin committed by Adam when he ate the forbidden fruit.

Paul's argument rests, therefore, on an assumption which is false. The premiss being wrong, the argument is unreliable. His theory, right or wrong, finds no support in his argument. And his theory, like all other theories, requires support from facts and not only from desires and hopes. The wish to believe is no reason for belief. In adapting themselves to reality men may find philosophy and comfort; in make-believe children alone can be happy.

In a child's make-believe play there is no harm. It is a thing for a moment, and when playtime is over the child returns to reality. But in the permanent make-believe of adults in high places there is much harm; for permanent make-believe is a drug that deadens the sense of reality, and that makes truth appear unimportant. It drugs, and eventually kills, the soul. It makes the onlooker think that all is false. To large numbers of our population religion has come to mean a thing of phrases which are either untrue or devoid of all meaning. For the mere assertion of authority no longer convinces men, of whom some at least have learnt to think for themselves, to ponder and to wonder. By most men the Pope has ceased to be regarded as infallible; by very few men are archbishops or compilers of creeds and liturgies regarded as infallible.

Men have begun to think for themselves, and not always

to allow others to do their thinking for them; and they have begun to realize that it is wiser to believe in things as they are than to believe that things are as they would wish them to be. They have learnt that it is more sensible to face reality than to imagine a world and pretend that the world of their imagination is the one that actually exists.

One man may find tranquillity of mind in the thought of everlasting sleep and the complete disappearance of his own personality. Another may find it in the hope of some undefined eternal existence, doing he knows not what, living he knows not where. Philosophies and religions have been founded upon both prospects. Both prospects are to be found painted in the Bible.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."[1] No knowledge and no wisdom in the Nirvana described by "The Preacher." All is over. The dead man is snuffed out like the light of a candle. He was, but is no more. Millions of human beings have found as much comfort in that thought as other millions have found in the expectation of unending life.

But comfort, tranquillity, and desire are not proofs. Let each man continue to dream dreams, but do not let him attempt to make of such dreams and desires doctrines to be accepted by all men as scientific facts.

Paul's argument, as translated into our Authorized Version of the Bible, is one of the most beautiful bits of prose in the English language, but to modern ears it does not carry conviction. For he assumes as facts various premises which we now know to be false. In some two thousand years or so, man by much labour has learnt some things which his ancestors never knew or even dreamt of, and among those new facts he has discovered are some which

[1] Ecclesiastes ix, 10.

render Paul's argument unconvincing even to those most appreciative of its beautiful diction.

For a sincere and vivid expression of any belief can still appeal to our æsthetic sense long after it has ceased to make any appeal to our intellects, and we can appreciate a point of view which is no longer ours if that point of view be portrayed by an artist who shows it clearly and honestly as it appeared to him and to his contemporaries. Some people prefer a photograph of a scene as it has been viewed by themselves to a picture of that same scene as it was viewed by the greatest of artists a hundred years or more ago; but some of us prefer the picture if we are not asked to pretend that the scene is unaltered, and if we are allowed to accept it for what it is—a work of art revealing the great mind of its painter, and not an impress of eternal truth.

But in any case Paul's doctrine of the resurrection of a spiritual body was soon set aside in favour of a more material doctrine. From the time when the Gospels appeared, the doctrine of a resurrection of man's flesh and blood and bones rapidly gained ground. That the evangelists taught the doctrine of a physical resurrection seems certain. For example, Mark teaches that it is better to go to Heaven with only one hand than to go to Hell with both, better to have but one foot than to have two burning for ever in the fire that is never quenched, better to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be cast into hell-fire.[1]

Yet, though they do teach that doctrine, they do not elaborate it, but leave their readers with the impression that what they say may be meant metaphorically. It is, indeed, remarkable that they give us so little information upon a subject which has always held such an attraction for the speculative human mind. For here, talking daily with God, the disciples might have sought for an authoritative and

[1] Mark ix, 43–8.

definite pronouncement on a matter which at that time, as at other times exercised the curiosity of so many.

An interest in a future life would, presumably, have caused the disciples and their Lord to discuss life after death; but it is a subject barely referred to anywhere in the Gospels, and the few references made to it throw no light upon the great question of the survival of a personal ego with a memory of the past. As a retort to the Sadducees, the statements that in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in Heaven,[1] and that "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,"[2] might score effective points, but they leave us not much the wiser as to the state of the dead, embodied or disembodied.

It was, however, not the evangelists, but the "Fathers of the Church," who settled and elaborated the doctrines of the Catholic Church. The opinions of the early Christians upon this matter of a physical or spiritual resurrection were unsettled, and Christian opinion remained unsettled until the Catholic Church became sufficiently powerful—after its establishment by the Emperor Constantine—to enforce upon all men a belief in its own doctrines.

Irenæus, who lived in the second half of the second century, took Marcion to task for denying the resurrection of the physical body. One of the arguments he uses is that, as God created man out of a little dust, surely He could much more easily re-integrate a man out of the dust into which his dead body decomposes.[3] In the Clementine Homilies Simon Magus (Paul ?) is abused as

[1] Matthew xxii, 30. [2] Matthew xxii, 32.

[3] The worthy Father was, of course, no more ignorant than other men of his time. The chemistry of decomposition, of plant growth, and of human nourishment was an unknown science in his day, and the doctrine of Evolution was unheard of. Hippolytus, in the third century, explained that the earth preserves the remains which have been dissolved in it, and that these remains become, like seed, ready to spring to life again; and Origen, who did not believe in the resurrection of the body, nevertheless argued that these remains contained the germ of another kind of body.

a heretic because he taught that flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God. Justin Martyr, in his treatise on the resurrection of the dead, stated that "the flesh shall rise entire and perfect."[1]

Some of the Fathers, as was their wont, went into details which to modern ears seem exceedingly coarse, and after discussing these matters affirmed their belief that the distinction of the sexes would be preserved, as men and women would rise again with their bodies perfect and entire, but that all the functions of the various members of the body would cease. That a person should be able to exist as a soul without a body, they pointed out, was absurd; so it was necessary, they said, to believe that the separated and dissolved or decomposed parts of the body would be re-assembled. The very identical body which died would be raised again.[2] Not even a hair or an eye or a tooth would be missing. How, indeed, could there be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in Hell if there were not eyes to weep and teeth to gnash?[3]

The numerous and varied problems which such a belief as this raises were not always ignored, but when they were mentioned it was only to be brushed aside as irrele-

[1] One of the arguments used by Justin Martyr and others in justification of their belief in a thing so apparently impossible as the resurrection of the flesh was that as men, if they had not known it to be a fact that human beings were generated by a drop of human seed, would not have believed that to be possible, so they should not believe that a resurrection of the flesh was impossible because they had never known it to occur. The weakness of that argument is so obvious that it need not be laboured, but it is worth noting as an example of the common theological confusion between inability to explain a known fact and knowledge of the impossibility of an alleged fact. That in some non-existent hypothetical circumstances men would be disinclined to believe something which is actually true is no reason for asking men to believe that something is true which they know cannot be true. Justin Martyr had every excuse for his mistaken logic, but moderns have none for repeating his arguments, as moderns know, or ought to know, more than he did about the chemistry of the decomposition and re-distribution of indestructible matter.

[2] For the arguments of the Fathers of the Church and of other ecclesiastical dignitaries, see "A Resurrection of Relics: A Modern Churchman's Defence in a Recent Charge of Heresy," by the Rev. H. D. A. Major, B.D., Principal of Ripon Hall, Oxford, and editor of "The Modern Churchman."

[3] Tertullian, St. Jerome, and many others, use this argument.

vances. For that a thing is absurd or impossible is irrelevant to those who are determined to believe and indifferent to evidence or logic. The retort that God is omnipotent and that His ways are incomprehensible seemed sufficient to meet any argument otherwise irrefutable. Omnipotence, according to them, could make one the same as three, twice two equal to five, and a particle of matter which had at various times formed part of hundreds of bodies again form part of all those bodies at one and the same time.

One of the problems which arose was whether to believe that each individual rose from the dead with his body just as it was when he or she died. Some died as infants a few hours old, others died as old and very decrepit men, others died fearfully diseased, others died minus various limbs. Were Heaven and Hell to be populated by puling infants, diseased and maimed men, and aged hags? Some men were eaten by animals, which in their turn were eaten by other men, so that the latter's body was partly composed of the flesh of other men. To whom would such flesh belong in the resurrection? Some, slain in battle perchance, would have lost all their blood before they died. Many would have lost teeth and hair. How would these appear at the last day?

The Fathers, and the ecclesiastics who succeeded them —including all the leading Reformers and Protestants, such as Calvin and Luther—asserted that, whatever had happened to the body in actual life, it would at the resurrection be found complete and perfect in all its limbs and parts; healthy and sane. The question of age they usually shirked, but a fourteenth-century writer named Rolle, perhaps inspired, was more explicit. He taught that the bodies of all men would in their future life be exactly as they had been or as they would have been at the age of thirty-two years and three months!

St. Augustine taught that even if the matter of men's bodies was "transformed into the substance of other

bodies, or dispersed into the elements, though it should become food for beasts or men, and be changed into their flesh, it returns in a moment of time to that human soul which animated it at the first." St. Thomas Aquinas declared that not a hair of a man's head would ever perish, but that, "when the quantity of matter which was attached to a man from the beginning of his life unto the end of it shall exceed the quantity which is properly assigned to a human body, this excess shall not rise with him."[1] He also discussed whether the hair and nails would still grow after the resurrection of a body. For such questions as that were seriously debated by these ecclesiastics who had forgotten any spiritual or metaphorical meanings originally given to the Christian doctrines. These, however, are the men who interpreted and handed down the religion which we are now expected to accept without question and without demur, and whose doctrines, we are told, need no re-stating or alteration!

One of the arguments they frequently used was that, as the soul was immortal and never died, it could not be the soul that rose from the dead, and therefore, since the fact that there was a resurrection from the dead was admitted by all Christians, it must be the body that rose.

The Protestants did not differ from the Catholics in their interpretation of the doctrine. The Church of England from the very first affirmed that "God shall stir and raise up the very flesh and bodies of all men, women, and children";[2] and Cranmer declared that all Paul meant by a spiritual body was a body less sinful though just as material as a man's ordinary body—in fact, the same body only purged of its vileness: the change would only be of qualities, not of substance.[3] And it was not only divines who affirmed their belief that by some wondrous miracle the

[1] "Summa Theologica." Translation quoted from Major, op. cit., p. 33.
[2] "The Necessary Doctrine," quoted by Major, op. cit., p. 37.
[3] Major, op. cit., p. 38.

body would be raised again at the last day. They taught that doctrine, and all men believed it.

That learned, eloquent, and imaginative doctor, Sir Thomas Browne, though he confesses himself "naturally inclined to that which misguided Zeal terms *Superstition*," only voices the general belief of his contemporaries when he affirms his belief that ".....our separated dust, after so many Pilgrimages and transformations into the parts of Minerals, Plants, Animals, Elements, shall at the Voice of God return into their primitive shapes, and joyn again to make up their primary and predestinate forms."[1]

To every Christian, until the nineteenth century was well advanced, the words "the resurrection of the body" meant, as indeed they can only mean, the resurrection of the actual flesh, bones, and blood of the dead person. Those, called heretics or infidels, who did not believe in the resurrection of the material body, but believed in a future life, spoke of "the resurrection of the dead."

When, in the nineteenth century, the concurrent advance in knowledge and decline in superstition made it impossible for educated and thinking men any longer to believe that their bodies were immortal, the clergy and priests found themselves on the horns of a dilemma.

On the one hand, they no longer themselves believed that bodies would rise from the grave, and no member of their congregations who ever gave a thought to the matter believed it; while, on the other hand, to acknowledge their disbelief and to alter the words of the twelve hundred years' old creeds would have raised an outcry which they did not dare face. The majority of their flocks never did give a thought to the meaning of the words they used, or, if they did give it a thought, were incapable of judging its implications. The new sceptics were in advance of

[1] "Religio Medici." Was Thomas Browne, like Samuel Butler, the writer of a satire which deceived most of his readers? In "Religio Medici," as in "Fair Haven," the most trenchant criticism frequently precedes the affirmation of belief.

their time, so—by way of compromise between those who knew the words were untrue and those who knew nothing, but clung, with all the blind persistence of ignorance and conservatism, to the ancient beliefs—they continued to repeat the old words, but explained to each other in books which their flocks never read, or could not understand, that these words really meant to them something different from what they meant to ordinary men.

Moreover, most priests are members of the "die-hard" fraternity—the men who regard all change as evil, and old formulæ as more precious than truths newly found. So they insist upon the retention of the words "resurrection of the body" and "resurrection of the flesh," though they know that neither the flesh nor the body ever rises again from the grave except as gases which are absorbed by the surrounding vegetation. For that a doctrine is untrue matters little to them, provided it be old.

They appear to think that a poverty or absence of logic may be compensated for by a wealth of rhetoric—as, indeed, it may be when the judges of the argument are guided by their emotions instead of by their intellects. So they inform us that the human body is something quite different from what we imagine it to be from our acquaintance with "the corrupt, degrading, shameful accidents which necessarily belong to"[1] it on earth. What it is, or what indeed it can possibly be apart from those particles of matter to which, when assembled together, we give the name "body," they do not attempt to explain.

> The "flesh" of which we speak as destined to a resurrection is not that material substance which we can see and handle, measured by properties of sense. It represents, as far as we now see, ourselves in our actual weakness, but essentially ourselves.[2]

So the word "flesh" is spoken of, but it does not mean "flesh"!

[1] F. D. Maurice, quoted by Major, op. cit., pp. 48–53.
[2] The late Bishop Westcott (of Durham), quoted by Major, op. cit., pp. 54–5.

> We believe for certain in the resurrection of the body. This does not mean that the particles of our former bodies, which were laid in the grave, and which have decayed and passed into all sorts and forms of natural life, will be collected together again; but it means that we in our same selves shall be re-clothed in a spiritual body which we shall recognize as our own unchanged selves.[1]

So, according to this distinguished prelate, we believe in the resurrection of the body not because the body is actually raised from the grave, but because he thinks that we shall one day receive another kind of body!

Another learned divine, having explained at some length and very conclusively how it is impossible that the body should be re-collected and re-animated, and how in an unscientific age "the only way a belief in the preservation of human identity could be expressed in unambiguous terms was by the use of the language which was adopted in the creed," states that

> the belief which the statement was framed to express is still the belief of the Christian Church; and though we may regard the words as inappropriate to express this belief, and may even desire to see them altered, nevertheless as long as we share this belief we can continue to use them without intellectual dishonesty.[2]

But, as we have seen above, the belief was, as a matter of fact, a belief in an actual re-assembling of the particles of the material body, and the words of the creeds, as the Canon must know, were framed explicitly to state that belief; so the ancient belief was, as a matter of fact, as he himself shows, *not* the same as the present belief. As for the Canon's conclusion that there is no intellectual dishonesty in using words "inappropriate to express" the belief actually held, we must leave such casuistry to the judgment of our readers, who would, we feel sure, if they were jury-

[1] Bishop Gore (of Worcester and of Oxford), quoted by Major, op. cit., p. 56.

[2] The Rev. Canon Charles Robinson, D.D., cited by Major, op. cit., pp. 57–9.

men in a case of alleged perjury, find the defendant who made such an assertion guilty of the offence with which he was charged.

Another clergyman[1] confesses his pleasure in finding that the word "flesh" has disappeared from the two creeds used in the daily services, but says nothing about its retention in the service laid down in the Church of England Prayer-book for the "Publick Baptism of Infants." He, too, having admitted that the resurrection body will not be flesh and blood, maintains that the words "resurrection of the body" mean the preservation of human identity and personality.

The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge issued in 1907 a book on "The Meaning of the Creed," and in this work the Rev. R. H. Malden, having heaped scorn upon the idea of a resurrection of the material body, writes: "When we say in the Creed 'I believe in the Resurrection *of the Body*,' what do we really mean? Briefly we mean that ultimately we shall lose nothing by death." As the reverend apologist has already explained that we do lose our bodies, no one but himself can tell what he means by this; nor does his statement in any way explain why we should state our belief in the resurrection of the body when we mean that we believe something else.

In an "Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles," which Mr. Major states is largely used in theological colleges, the doctrine is defended by stating that "all that our present body stands for will still be ours. We shall possess an organism adapted for life under future conditions as the body is adapted for life under earthly conditions." Here, once again, we find that, though the writer uses and defends the words "resurrection of the body," he avows that he believes that he will possess a new organism adapted for life elsewhere, and not his body adapted as it is to life here. He does not pretend that

[1] The late Dean Beeching, cited by Major, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

the actual body will rise again, but states that "all that our present body stands for will still be ours."

Mr. Major quotes other apologists, and shows that none of the prominent ecclesiastics who have written on this subject in recent years[1] believe in a resurrection of the actual body. What they do actually mean when they use the words "resurrection of the body" it is impossible to say, and the author of "A Resurrection of Relics" charitably refrains from inquiring.

> We are not concerned here and now to elucidate what is the exact mode of the resurrection of the dead which these English theologians hold; but what they do *not* hold is quite clear. They do not hold the Catholic doctrine of the mode of the resurrection of the dead. What some of them mean precisely would be very difficult to formulate, since they use traditional terms in an untraditional sense, and disguise the fact that they have jettisoned the traditional doctrine by using the word "flesh" without meaning this flesh, and by using the word "body" without meaning the body put into the grave. This ambidexterity of meaning, which for a serious student of dogma is really "intellectually intolerable," is doubtless excusable in view of the transition through which Christian thought has been passing during the past three-quarters of a century. What, however, is not excusable is to pretend, as do some writers, that, although the resurrection of the flesh has been jettisoned, there has been no important departure from Catholic doctrine in this matter.[2]

To Mr. Major's presentation and summing-up of the case it is unnecessary to add anything. It is refreshing to find that there is at least one learned clergyman of the Church of England who refuses to quibble about this doctrine, and who honestly and plainly confesses that disbelief

[1] During the twentieth century. He does not quote the theologians who, even in the last half of the nineteenth century, still affirmed their belief in the resurrection of the actual bodies of dead men. The writings of Newman and the sermons of Spurgeon—to take as examples men of two opposite schools—both contain unequivocal statements that the resurrection is bodily and not merely spiritual. Many of the nineteenth-century divines—as Mr. Major shows—did not believe in this doctrine, but until the twentieth century some undoubtedly still did.

[2] Major, op. cit., pp. 69–70.

which his fellows try to conceal under torrents of meaningless and disingenuous rhetoric. That such honesty has been the cause of his being attacked and charged with heresy by obscurantists is, of course, not surprising. The hunting of heretics is a sport that has always appealed to those who seek for glory without danger, and for distinction without mental effort. But what must appear most strange and surprising, to any one not acquainted with the theological substitute for logic, is that the Bishop of Oxford, when giving his reasons for not proceeding further with the case against Mr. Major, stated: "I do not find that Mr. Major denies the doctrine of the Resurrection of the body; in fact, he positively asserts his belief in 'the full survival of all that constitutes whatever is essential to human personality; in short, all that is meant by personal identity.'"

Wonderful! We rub our eyes or our spectacles, and think we must have misread the Bishop's words. But no; after all Mr. Major's assertions that he does not believe in the "Resurrection of the Body,"[1] the Bishop decides that he really does so believe because he has asserted his belief in something else.

What need have we of further evidence? Ecclesiastical dignitaries without any doubt use words to which they do not attach the ordinary meaning or any meaning at all. They are prepared to maintain any proposition whatever —if it suits them to do so—by the easy process of entirely altering the meaning of the words of the English language. And this they will do, not for the purpose of sustaining some great moral cause, but from fear of alarming or of enraging the most ignorant of their own supporters. For what moral cause can be supported by pretence? What but pandering to the prejudices of the ignorant can prompt men

[1] His own words are that he believes in "the survival of death by a personality which has shed its physical integument for ever." We are not at present concerned with the question of his justification for that statement, but only with the fact that the statement very clearly denies the survival of a body.

to pretend to believe in something which, to those who are not entirely ignorant, is an obvious absurdity?

It is often said that the existence of a widely spread superstition proves that there is some basis of fact as its foundation; and, as a belief in the eventual resurrection of bodies from the grave is very common, especially among primitive and uncivilized peoples, this supposed fact is sometimes quoted in support of the likelihood of a resurrection of the body. But it is a matter of every-day experience that widely held beliefs are often founded upon foolish misunderstandings, or upon the surmises of ill-informed gossips.

In its most ancient form the belief in a bodily resurrection probably originated in man's mistaken interpretation of dreams. Men dreamt—and believed that their dreams were actual happenings—that while their bodies slept their spirits were away hunting or fighting or love-making. And if the spirit left the body for a time in sleep and then returned to it, so, they thought, it left the body for a rather longer time at death and would eventually return to it. They buried their warriors and kings with their weapons and treasure alongside them in the grave, and sometimes they slew their wives and their slaves on the funeral pyre. For, if the spirit returned to the dead man's body, he would require these articles of daily use and these attendants and mates. If it was only a spiritual resurrection which was to be expected, the spirits of the wives and of the slaves might, indeed, be considered necessary, but only if it was a bodily resurrection would tools and weapons and money also be required.[1]

So, long before any of the present existing religions was ever heard of, men believed in a bodily resurrection, and took precautions to ensure that their principal men would

[1] Long before the Christian era the Druids had so convinced men of the existence of a future life that it was possible to borrow money on a promise to repay in the next life—a promise which would hardly be considered valuable in Lombard Street to-day!

be provided with all that men in their station of life would require when the time came.

And later on, but still long before the Christian era, when men in India, in Egypt, in Greece, and in other countries began to speculate upon the problems of good and evil, it was noticed that the fact that virtue often suffered, and that vice was sometimes triumphant, was incompatible with the idea of an all-powerful and beneficent God. The balance of justice must, they thought, be somehow equalized. A new world must be called upon to redress the balance of the old. Some thought that by a series of incarnations, dependent upon the acts which each man did, justice might be eventually attained. Others thought that an after-life in a Heaven or a Hell, to which a just and all-seeing judge would consign men according to their merits, might redress the balance of good and evil in this life. But, whether the future life was spent as a new incarnation on this earth or as one of the departed in another and unknown world, it was, and could only be imagined as, a life spent in a body—shadowy, perhaps, but still a body with eyes that could see, ears to hear by, a mouth to speak with, and all limbs complete. Life without a body could not be conceived.

In the glimmering dawn of the physical sciences, philosophers might ridicule such notions, but the general public greedily grasped, and obstinately clung to, doctrines so in keeping with their natural desires. For men will always, while they are active and healthy in body and mind, long to survive either to enjoy life or, more altruistically, to watch the future of the human race, of their country, and of those dear to them. They, until they have grown ill or old and weary, resent the thought of annihilation and of a world going on without their presence, indifferent to, and unmindful of, them.

They therefore eagerly embrace the first creed they hear which promises them survival, and gladly accept the arguments of any casuist who attempts to prove, or the

assertions of those who merely affirm, what they are so anxious to believe. In religion, as in politics, it is not facts but pleasant promises that men listen to. They listen, and they say that they believe; but they do not always act as if the belief was a firm conviction.

The pagan philosophers, to whom death was the end of all things, met it as boldly as—or even more bravely than—the Christian, for whom death is said to be the beginning of better things. Epictetus wrote: "Why should we fear death? For where death is, there we are not; and where we are, there death is not." And Cicero, who believed that there was a possibility but no certainty of the survival of human personality after death, said that if death extinguished the soul it was an event which could be utterly disregarded, and if death brought reunion with old friends it was desirable. So death, he wrote, should not be feared, as in one case one would not be miserable, and in the other one would certainly be happy (De Senectute). Marcus Aurelius and many other pagan sages wrote in a similar strain, voicing the brave, unselfish sentiments of the Stoics and other ancient philosophers. "There is nothing after death, and death itself is nothing." Death was for them rest after labour, sleep after toil, and a release from pain, anxieties, and sorrows; as it was, it seems, in the eyes of our greatest poet,

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.[1]

Even when they did believe that they possessed immortal souls, no fear of Hell ruffled their calm acquiescence in the unalterable facts of life and death. When the cup of hemlock is brought to him, Socrates drinks it without any lament, or fear, or regret; a man, not a child crying for the moon! It was the ghastly Christian doctrine of everlasting hell-fire which first made the idea of death terrible; and a

[1] Shakespeare, "The Tempest," Act iv, Scene i.

priesthood, anxious for power and profit, taught that eternal misery was the lot of most men, the punishment ordained for them because their remote ancestors ate an apple, and to be eluded only by conforming to their rites and subscribing to their funds. We hear but little in these days about those fires of Hell which figured so prominently in the sermons of eighteenth-century divines; but the lost fear of Hell does not seem to have been replaced by a more confident hope of Heaven, even in the minds of the clergy. The preacher who extols the joys of a future life, and who assures us—regardless of the rules of poesy—that his tongue will never tire of chanting in the heavenly choir, exhibits no anxiety to leave the transitory pleasures of the present one.[1]

It appears that only a pious and rather faint hope upholds many of those who speak of this "undoubted certainty." That such a hope should spring up in the breasts of men is not surprising. Few of us are altogether contented with our lot in the world. Most of us imagine ourselves to be worthy and capable of better things. When young, we expect that the future will give us all that we then desire; when middle-aged, we still hope eventually to obtain those things that we have missed in the past. As we run our course on earth such expectations and such hopes have been ours, yet when old age approaches we find that our ambitions are still unfulfilled, and that those abilities upon which we prided ourselves in our youth are still unrecognized and therefore unrewarded. We begin to resent our probable departure before our work is done, or even begun. We have suffered misfortunes; some, even more unworthy than we, have been exceedingly fortunate. And so the priests of some religion find us, and tell us that our

[1] The Church of England Hymns "Ancient and Modern," even those written for children, are full of expressions indicating a desire for death. But we would be very much mistaken if we thought that the singers really longed for death, or were conscious hypocrites, for the real explanation is that the worshippers pay no attention to the real meaning of the words they use.

account will be adjusted in another and better world, where books are kept with meticulous care, and where profit and loss will be balanced with pettifogging accuracy. If my brother has had in this world more joys than I, he will, to balance the account, enjoy fewer in the next. The promise reeks of the counting-house!

The wise man scorns such promises of deferred pay. He reconciles himself betimes to the knowledge that his aspirations were foolish and his abilities illusory; he consoles himself with the thought that all is vanity. The unwise alone, unable to grasp the substance, still grab a shadow, and continue to believe that their dreams will come true.

Like grass, man withers away in the autumn; like grass, he comes to life again in the spring. Yet not the same man but another rises, as a new blade of grass springs from the old root. It is not personality which survives, but the chemical atoms which are re-combined in new forms, which in their turn suffer dissolution and renewed evolution.

This has been recognized by every philosopher whose theories have been based upon physical knowledge rather than upon theological speculations—upon what is actually known and not upon what is theoretically desired. It is a far cry from the theories of any modern philosopher to the doctrine of the survival of the individual human body, or even to the doctrine of the survival of human personality. The former doctrine science explicitly contradicts; to the latter it gives no support whatever.

How far back in the history of the world does the doctrine of resurrection apply? Surely not only to those who, by chance, have been born in Christian ages and in Christian lands? Yet if further back, then how far? As we go back in time we come to millions of men hardly better than apes or dogs; further back still we come to ancestors even less highly developed than those creatures. Are all these to rise again and live in Heaven or Hell?

At what stage in the evolutionary process does man acquire an immortal soul? What is this soul when he acquires it? Mind is unknown to us save as the function of a body, growing up with the body, getting worn out in old age, like the body. If mind and body are inseparable, a soul which survives the body cannot be mind. Is this soul individual and recognizable, or is it, as the Hindus teach, but a fragment of the one great Universal Soul? If men in Heaven, having no bodies, neither eat nor work nor do any other thing which they do here by virtue of their bodies, is Heaven merely Nirvana?

At times charlatans arise and preach that the general resurrection of the dead is about to take place, and that "millions now living will never die."[1] The dates which, quoting in support of their prophecies the Revelation of St. John and other Biblical books, they fix for this great event come and go, but they are forgotten when a successor foretelling a new date appears on the scene.

In England such prophets are not uncommon; in America they are numerous. And in other climes, and among men who profess other religions, they are sometimes to be found. After the great "influenza" epidemic in 1918, large numbers of the rural inhabitants of the Indian Deccan became convinced that all those who had died during the past year would rise from the dead on the next Hindu New Year's Day. In many cases graves were opened, and elaborate preparations made to receive friends and relatives after their resurrection from the dead. Similar expectations are not uncommon among other communities, both Eastern and Western. They are founded upon no rational basis, but they may give rise to

[1] A lecturer from the "International Bible Students Association" is at present (1923) stumping England with this battle-cry. His advent is heralded by these words upon posters and upon pamphlets delivered at every house in the town he is about to visit. Doubtless he deludes many ignorant persons who have never heard of the proceedings at Rome in the year 1000, or of any of the other millennium "stunts"; and doubtless he sells many of the Association's absurd booklets.

widely held doctrines, even after they have been proved false in particular cases. For men are always ready to believe that which they wish to believe, and a new generation of gulls is always produced for the sustenance of hawks. The prophet sends the hat round, and decamps before his dupes discover that his prophecies are false. That a belief is widely held is no guarantee that it is based upon any foundation of fact.

That men should believe things which are not true, or even reasonable, is comprehensible and excusable. We are all fallible. But that men should pretend to believe things which they know are untrue is reprehensible and inexcusable. Many men believe, and, believing, are justified in teaching, that there will be another life after death; but no educated man believes, and no educated man is justified in teaching, that men will rise again from their graves in their present bodies—and that is the literal and only possible meaning of an affirmation that there will be a "resurrection of the body."

Chapter VI

MODERN SCEPTICISM

That there should ever have been any doubt about the Resurrection of Jesus is, if that event really took place, a very remarkable and strange thing. For, according to the Gospel stories, the crucifixion and death of Jesus were events which must have been notorious. The onlookers and the other inhabitants of Jerusalem and of its neighbourhood would have learnt that Jesus had died, like other men. Is it conceivable—if that death was suffered for the purpose of redeeming those who believed in His divinity—that Jesus would not have made the fact of His resurrection as conspicuous as the fact of his death had been? The Christian doctrine is that Jesus rose from the dead that all might believe in Him, and, believing, might gain eternal life. If that doctrine is true, is it conceivable that Jesus would, after His resurrection, have appeared only to His disciples? Would he not, anxious to save all men, have appeared so unmistakably and to so many that no doubts could have arisen? Would any beneficent God, who had come to earth and died for mankind, have acted so furtively that only a very few men knew of this proof of His divinity? To ask us to believe that he did so is to ask us at the same time to believe not only, as theologians say, that the ways of God are passing strange, but that the ways of God are deliberately calculated to mystify and deceive. We can believe that God is incomprehensible, but we cannot believe, on such evidence as is produced, that He is a deliberate mystifier and deceiver.

Yet the New Testament writers give us to understand that out of the whole Jewish nation but a mere handful of disciples knew of, or believed in, this miraculous event. And, apart from the New Testament books, all other history

confirms the fact that the great majority of the Jews either knew nothing at all about the events recorded in the Gospels, or, at any rate, had never heard anything which caused them to believe that Jesus was a God. This marvellous event occurred unnoticed by any pagan, or unconverted Jewish, historian; and the circumstances in which it occurred were recorded in writing by no Christian author until many years after it is said to have taken place. The people who lived where the event is said to have taken place knew nothing about it; the Gentiles who could have had no first-hand knowledge of the events, but who were familiar with, and ready to believe in, stories about resurrections from the dead, were the principal converts to Christianity in the first centuries of our era.

And though in the first centuries of the Christian era and in medieval times men were so ready to believe in resurrections from the dead, there were always some men, even among those who professed and called themselves Christians, who realized the difficulties of believing that Jesus rose from the dead. In the second-century writings of Christian Fathers we discover many references to those Christians who did not believe in the Resurrection, and in the third and fourth centuries we find that many ingenious but unsuccessful attempts were made by teachers of Christianity to remove some of those difficulties, by reconciling the contradictory accounts given of the event in the four Gospels.

For, until Constantine established the "Catholic" form of Christianity in the fourth century, men could profess the Christian faith without accepting the doctrine of a physical resurrection. Until the Gnostic and other "heretical" forms of Christianity were suppressed, men might call themselves Christians, and yet believe that the Resurrection was a resurrection from a worldly life to a spiritual life—a regeneration of the soul, and not a bringing back to life of dead matter.

Some Christians believed that the story of a physical

resurrection was an allegory, and that it had originally been related as a symbolic account of a spiritual resurrection. They believed that Christ had died, but that His spirit rose again, and that many of the other Christian resurrection stories which were current were really metaphorical accounts of men who had relapsed from, and been brought back again to, a Christian life. In this sense many of the early resurrection stories can undoubtedly be interpreted. They were obviously so intended, even though by most of their hearers they were taken for accounts of physical miracles.

Some Gnostics taught[1] that when the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended upon Jesus it became joined to his animal body, and thus "raised him from the dead" —from mere materialism to a spiritual life. And we find traces of the same doctrine even in our Canonical books.

"He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."[2] That was the spiritual, the Gnostic, and the primitive Christian idea of a resurrection—nothing material, and nothing miraculous in the ordinary sense of that word. They believed, in fact, not in a physical resurrection, but in a spiritual regeneration—a re-birth "from above."[3] To become as little children and forget all worldly ambitions was the regeneration sought, or at any rate recommended.

According to other Gnostics, the Phrygians called man dead "when buried in the body, as though in a tomb or sepulchre," and said that men remained dead unless they rose, "through the gate of Heaven," to a spiritual life.[4] So the resurrections they spoke of were evidently what we would call regenerations. The death was a death of

[1] So, we are informed by Hippolytus (early third century) in his work on the Christian books, the Valentinians taught.

[2] Hebrews viii, 11. Read the whole chapter for development of doctrine.

[3] Cf. John iii, 3–5; and see margin of A.V. for alternative "from above."

[4] Hippolytus' version of "The Myth of Man in the Gnostic Mysteries," in his "Philosophumena, or Refutation of all Heresies." See pp. 172–3 of G. R. S. Mead's "Thrice Greatest Hermes."

man's animal nature; the resurrection was a renewed life in a spiritual nature. That the wicked or worldly-minded should turn from his evil ways and live is an injunction frequently given, and it was this kind of resurrection from death to life which was thought of by the spiritually-minded Gnostics, and not a physical resuscitation of dead flesh.

Men are, however, always inclined to materialize symbolical expressions, and to interpret allegorical rites as representative of actual occurrences. This tendency is well illustrated by a custom of some Indians who believed that, after certain events in their lives, men should, before their re-admittance into their religious communities or into their castes, be re-born. They made an immense female figure, into which the man to be regenerated was placed, and whence he was drawn out in the same manner as if he were being given birth to. Such figures may, perhaps, be no longer used for this purpose, but accounts of the ceremony are given by many writers who have actually witnessed it.[1]

Among many races it is the custom to mark the entry of youths into manhood by ceremonies at which they are supposed to put away childish things and start afresh as grown-up men. Until such ceremonies have taken place a young man is not supposed to marry, and is not considered fit to take any part in the councils of the tribe. The Christian confirmation service is the nearest parallel we have to such ceremonies; but, like other modern religious ceremonies, it of course carries with it no political or practical consequences, as did the ancient pagan ceremonies. At these ceremonies it was usual to dramatize in some way or other the idea of the youth's death and the man's rising from that death.

Thus, at the initiation ceremonies held by Australian

[1] On Malabar Hill, in Bombay, Indians still pass through a hole in some rocks, along a natural tunnel, and out by another hole. This they call being "born again."

aboriginal tribes, when their youths pass from boyhood to manhood, the lads are supposed to be killed and raised to life again as men. In a very common variation of the ceremony men are buried just beneath the surface of the ground, which, before the ceremony commences, is carefully smoothed over to hide all traces of the burial; and, at a given signal, they rise from the ground as if they were dead men coming to life again.[1] Examples of similar ceremonies, in which the death and resurrection of the initiated are counterfeited,[2] have been described by anthropologists from many parts of the world.

The Gnostic doctrine of palingenesis (re-birth, regeneration, or death to the lower and resurrection to the higher life) was a more spiritual conception than the ideas on which these puberty ceremonials were founded. The initiate into the Gnostic mysteries learnt at first about the origin of all things (genesis), and was afterwards gradually taught the meaning of re-birth (palingenesis). Such expressions as "dead to sin," "the destruction of the body of sin," and "not sleeping as others," show that the re-birth had a more moral implication than there was about the political coming-of-age ceremonies of the savages.

Bardaisan related as an allegory how a prince (the Logos or Christ) left behind him, when he returned to his Father, the "filthy and unclean garb" (the body) which he had worn while in Egypt (the world);[3] and the school of Gnostics to which Bardaisan belonged undoubtedly taught that it was the soul and not the body of Jesus which rose from death (unto sin) and ascended to Heaven (spiritual perfection).[4] The corrupt body was

[1] See Frazer, "Golden Bough" (1890 edition), vol. ii, chapter iv, pp. 343–4.

[2] For curious examples—from the Congo, see ibid, pp. 345–6; from North America, pp. 349–52; and from New Guinea, p. 354.

[3] See "The Hymn of the Robe of Glory," from the Acts of Thomas, quoted by G. R. S. Mead, pp. 406–14, in "Fragments of a Faith Forgotten."

[4] St. John's Gospel has several texts which speak of regeneration in the passage from death to life—e.g. John v, 24–5: "He that heareth my word .....is passed from death unto life.....the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live."

left behind; the incorrupt soul rose from the world and rejoined its Emanator (the Father) in the Pleroma (the Fullness of the God-head), dwelling in Heaven.

According to the Acts of John, Jesus returned after His death and lived among his disciples for several years, teaching the most advanced initiates the secrets of Heaven; but it was in a "psychic" and not in a material body that he appeared to them.[1] The idea of a psychic body distinct from the physical body was familiar to the Gnostics, and is familiar to present students of esoteric Buddhism and kindred theosophies. The modern "spiritualist" believes that he will be able to examine such a psychic body if he can only manage to catch some "ectoplasm" in his hands!

But to most Gnostics the resurrection was not psychic, but spiritual. When the initiate learnt the esoteric doctrines of his cult he was expected to lay aside the material life—worldly ambitions and sensuous pleasures—and take up a spiritual life—self-sacrifice and the pursuit of divine knowledge. In some Christian sects the reception of the rite of baptism was spoken of as "rising from the dead."[2] These sects scorned the materialistic conception of resurrection, and they were, therefore, anathematized by the grossly material sect which subsequently attained to power and assumed the title of orthodox. The spiritual doctrine was eventually forgotten, and the materialistic doctrine spoken of as if it had been the original and the only Christian doctrine. But in the early days of Christianity it was recognized that some Christians did not believe in the physical resurrection. From the writings of the orthodox Fathers themselves, this is abundantly made clear.

[1] It was believed that He had the power of making this spiritual body visible and even tangible by an illusion of His disciples' senses of sight and touch.

[2] Just as many of the pagans believed themselves to be regenerated by the blood of the bull when they underwent the baptismal rites which formed part of the sacraments in the cults of Mithra and of Attis.

Irenæus tells us that some of the Gnostics believed that Christ "returned with wisdom to the incorruptible Æon" when Jesus was crucified, but that Christ did not forget Jesus, to whom he sent down Power which animated his soul while His body mouldered in the grave. For the theory that the Christ spirit entered Jesus at His baptism and left Him at His death was supported after the appearance of the Gospels by quoting the words, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" as being the cry of the man Jesus when the Christ spirit left him.[1]

Hegesippus, an orthodox Christian writer in the last quarter of the second century, refers to the numerous "heretical" sects of Christians who did not believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus; and there is no doubt that a very large number of Christians in the early days of the religion never accepted the Resurrection doctrine which was eventually made the very corner-stone of Catholicism and of its successors, the various Protestant sects. Arguments in support of the doctrine have sometimes been founded upon the alleged universal belief of primitive Christians; but even if the universal belief of a very superstitious class of men (and no one can deny the superstitious credulity of that age) is good evidence, the arguments do not apply to this case, as the belief was not universal, but confined to only one sect of Christians (or only to some out of many sects); and, moreover, it is possible that those who did so believe were not the earliest sects, nor those best acquainted with the original facts.

In the fourth century, however, Catholicism was established by Constantine as the State religion of the Roman Empire, and in less than two centuries from that time the triumph of that form of Christianity was complete. Thenceforth, for over a thousand years, the doctrine of

[1] In the Gospel of Peter the words said to have been uttered on the Cross were: "My Power, my Power, thou hast left me." Matthew and Mark record the better known version, but both Luke and John give, as the last words from the Cross, quite different sayings.

the physical resurrection was unquestioned by any Christians. An immensely powerful ecclesiastical organization succeeded in suppressing all heresies, and in so discouraging learning that few men had the capacity, and fewer still the desire, to study the history of the past. The Church settled what men should believe, and men professed their belief in whatever the Church told them. It was the tradition, and therefore it must be true; or the ecclesiastical authorities said so, and they surely knew. With the Renaissance of learning came the first tentative questionings of the Church's authority in matters of belief; but those questions were first asked of the most flagrant and most recent absurdities and abuses, and it was not until the eighteenth century that the fundamentals of religion, and more especially of religious cosmologies, once more came under review. Throughout the nineteenth century the spirit of scientific inquiry rapidly spread. The Churches were weakened by dissensions among themselves, and were losing their power of persecution. Men could no longer be burned at the stake for declaring that the earth moved round the sun; theories could be judged by facts, and not only by the doctrines taught two thousand years earlier by the authors of the Biblical books. Governments were, indeed, still allied with established Churches, and could make things unpleasant for those who published unorthodox views. Even in France, where comparative liberty of opinion and speech was gained long before it was conceded in England, those who depended upon official posts for their livelihood were forced to remain silent. For writing his "Vie de Jésus," a most reverent biography, which, save for the miraculous, describes Jesus exactly as the Gospels describe him, Renan was deprived of his professorship at the Collége de France. And in other countries the hand of authority would have descended even more heavily upon his shoulders.

But by the end of the nineteenth century most men had learnt the fact that no theory or doctrine is worth

defending unless it can be defended on its own merits, that truth is all-important, and that if a doctrine or theory is true it can survive criticism and is not in need of other defences than logic. Some men still persisted, and still persist, in refusing to listen to any criticism of their inherited creeds—religious or political—and in attacking by any means in their power those who, however honestly and however dispassionately, inquire into their validity; but for the first time after about fifteen hundred years those creeds could be openly examined and discussed, and the result of such examination and discussion was to convince men that many of the cherished beliefs of olden days were mistaken and misplaced. The clergy alone, of all those who had the ability to inquire, closed their eyes and their ears to the facts of science and the criticisms of the historians, for the clergy are part of an organization designed not for the discovery of truth, but for the teaching of ancient doctrines. They, while still only half educated, swear that they accept the beliefs of their predecessors. Henceforth they are debarred from making any inquiries, or, at any rate, from pursuing such inquiries to their logical conclusions, as they feel that if they inquire they may doubt, and that, if they accept the conclusions to which inquiry seems to lead all inquirers, they may break the oaths which they swore when ordained. Their very livelihood depends upon the retention of certain beliefs. Can they risk all by running any chances of becoming sceptics?

No living science requires its learners or its teachers to swear to a creed or to accept any doctrine, for all that lives changes, and the creed—be it political, or scientific, or artistic, or religious—to which we would willingly assent to-day becomes a hundred years hence a collection of exploded fallacies. And even in a much shorter space of time we discover some errors in the hypotheses which first formed the basis of our theories and our practice. If we are capable of learning and anxious to learn, and unpre-

judiced about teachers, we set aside before we grow old many of the mistaken theories which in our youth we regarded as irrefutable truths. The prejudices of the social class to which we belong, the prejudices of the age in which we live, the prejudices of the country in which we were born, and, above all, the prejudices of youth itself, we set aside as we learn more about other classes, more about past ages, more about other countries, and more about life itself. In politics, the doctrines held by any party to-day differ widely from the doctrines held by those who bore the same party label two generations ago, though many individuals deny the fact and believe themselves to be preaching the old and pure gospel of their forerunners. Even the die-hard son of a Conservative sire has conveniently forgotten something that his father thought he knew, or has haply learnt something that his father never knew. It is in religion, and in religion alone, that theories are crystallized into dogmas which must never change.

So the clergy seldom inquired into the origin of their beliefs, and never confessed that any of them were erroneous. Even when the creation story in Genesis had been recognized by all other educated men as mere folk-lore and as inconsistent with the truth about the origin of the world, the clergy continued to teach it as inspired truth, and to pretend that by slight alterations in the natural meaning of a few words it could be brought into accordance with the known facts of geology and biology.

That they hesitated to accept the logical conclusions to be drawn from the newly-discovered facts is not at all surprising. Who, indeed, would not hesitate to accept a new theory which undermined the very foundations upon which he has built his philosophy and his career? Who, in such circumstances, would not frantically search for some explanation, however far-fetched, that might reconcile the new with the old? Moreover, new knowledge spreads but very slowly through the social mass, and

it is only a small minority who can appreciate the arguments by which new theories are supported. Most people compare conclusions and not arguments. Most people are content to be told *what* to believe, and do not wish to know *why* they should believe. And the clergyman is not a private individual who can, without grave inconveniences, alter his opinions at short notice after inquiry and reflection. He is a public man who week by week affirms his convictions in the most solemn and unequivocal manner. He is one of a corporation sworn to hold certain beliefs, and his confrères—most bigoted when most ignorant—will many of them not yet have heard a rumour of what he himself has learnt is the truth. For the advance of knowledge is not conspicuous to those whose business and whose interests lie apart from science. The advance from one assured position to another is comparatively slow. Facts are laboriously accumulated, and the theories by which the meaning of those facts is eventually interpreted are but tentative hypotheses for a long time before they can be accepted as proved explanations of the laws of nature. To the philosopher it is known that the process of interpretation is gradual; to the public the new theory appears like a sudden guess—a guess the more evidently absurd the more it differs from the age-old interpretations which it supersedes.

So those who knew waited for the time when those who did not know should have learnt something about the new outlook upon the world, and while they waited sought for compromises, however illogical and however far-fetched. But even theologians cannot for ever continue to teach doctrines which have been exploded, and when the twentieth century dawned many of them had begun to realize that their doctrines ought to be brought into closer relation with the biological, geological, and historical knowledge which was not now confined to the learned. It could no longer be concealed from the public that the early chapters of Genesis were folk-lore, and inconsistent

with such facts as were known about the origin of the world; so the bolder of the clergy confessed that the story of the fall of man was not a true story, and even the less bold refrained from still pretending that it was. Doctrinal errors less obvious to the public might, however, still, they thought, be salved; and the last quarter of a century has witnessed the frantic efforts of the clergy to reconcile doctrines with facts by giving new meanings to, and new explanations of, the former when it could no longer be concealed that they were, in their literal meaning, irreconcilable with the latter. Now they tacitly admit that the events upon which the doctrines were said to have been based never actually occurred; but, instead of frankly acknowledging that the doctrines can therefore no longer be held, they attempt to give new meanings to the doctrines, and to teach them as metaphors and allegories. Or they make no attempt to maintain that the doctrines are true even as allegories, but defend them on the ground that their abandonment would create a schism in the Church.

For example, at a recent Church Congress,[1] the Bishop of Ripon, in the course of a discussion on "The Gospel and the Creeds," defended the latter on the ground that they "are necessary to the promulgation of the Gospel and the maintenance of the Christian religion." He made no attempt to show that the creeds were in fact true, but maintained that "by their close connection with historic fact they preserve the atmosphere of ordinary daily experience in which the Christian faith is most completely at home."[2]

"Their close connection with historic fact"! What a euphemism for "not quite true"! The Bishop surely realizes that there is no place for a *proxime accessit* in connection with a Resurrection and a Virgin Birth. A person cannot nearly be raised from the dead, or nearly born of a virgin. These things happened or they did not

[1] Held at Sheffield, October, 1922.
[2] Quotations are from the report in "The Times" of October 13, 1922.

happen. There is no middle course between happening and not happening; no compromise in such matters between the truth and a fiction.

"Atmosphere of ordinary daily experience"! If these events are mere ordinary daily experiences, they can have no importance whatever, and we must be living in a world of constant illusion. It is a relief to turn from such an atmosphere of unreality to the outspoken remarks made by Dr. Rashdall, the Dean of Carlisle, at this same Congress.

> What was it [said the learned Dean] that made the existing creeds a difficulty to modern minds? Our existing creeds contained two elements: there were the historical and the metaphysical elements. Nobody believed that there was literally any right hand or left hand of God. No modern man believed what the framers of our Western creeds probably meant by the words "He descended into Hell"—that was, that He descended into a place below the surface of this planet which you would come to if you dig deep enough. Nobody believed what was originally meant by "He ascended into Heaven." Taken literally, such an assertion implied a geocentric universe. It was reasonable to plead for the permission of a similar latitude in interpreting the clause relating to the Resurrection. The time might come when a proposal to return to the original Creed of the Nicene Council, which contained nothing about the Virgin Birth, might obtain a hearing. Till then those who did not want the door of the Church to be closed against an increasing number of thoughtful young men must put themselves on the side of liberty in this matter, whatever their personal attitude might be. The modern man, whether ignorant or learned, never could believe as men believed in the third and fourth centuries—not even the most orthodox.

These are plain words, which no one who has studied recent theological discussions and has any regard for logic and truth is likely to dispute. When we read them, after reading the speeches and writings of obscurantists and mystics, we seem to have issued from a fog into the clear light of day. But what can the Dean, who, it appears, himself advocates the retention of "the Apostles' Creed" and of "the so-called Nicene Creed," mean by "latitude

in interpreting" a clause which states something as a fact? How can he defend the use of words which he acknowledges that nobody believes in their original meaning?[1]

Article IV of the Articles of Religion[2] which enshrine the doctrines to which every clergyman of the Church of England must subscribe, and which, if "any Head or Master of a College" or official of the Church deny or "put his own sense or comment" in the place of "the literal and grammatical sense," he shall be censured,[3] lays down that "Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature; wherewith he ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth, until he return to judge all men at the last day." Yet, in the face of the fact that they all explicitly profess to believe this doctrine as thus laid down, many clergymen attempt to explain the Resurrection story by the theory of "Subjective Visions" (that the disciples, worked upon by their expectations and by the rumours of an actual resurrection, imagined that they saw the risen Jesus), or by the "Objective Vision" theory (that the disciples actually saw "the ghost" of the dead Jesus).

An empty tomb—and this could be accounted for either by the theory that some of the other disciples took away the body, as the Jews (according to Matthew xxviii, 11–15) commonly reported, or by the theory that the Romans did so to prevent disturbances—a little imagination, and a good deal of gossip might account for a belief in a Resurrection. Each of these theories finds supporters among men who are professedly orthodox, though how they find it possible to reconcile their actual with their

[1] If nobody believes these phrases in their original meaning, the Dean and the Churches are confronted with no problem. The fact is that the ignorant, who still form a very large proportion of nearly all congregations, do still thus believe them, and therefore the ecclesiastical authorities fear to act.

[2] See Prayer Book.

[3] See Rubric at head of "Articles" in Prayer Book.

ostensible beliefs it is difficult to imagine. For, though apologists may argue that the tradition of the Resurrection originated in a vision or visions, they cannot pretend that the Gospel accounts of the appearances can be reconciled with their theory. The evangelists take pains to show that it was no ghostly appearance which they describe. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones," and cannot draw attention to the solidity of its hands and feet, nor eat broiled fish and honeycomb.[1]

We know that Gnostic sects referred to the Resurrection as a vision or as a spiritual conception, and it is possible—even probable—that these details about the solid flesh were written by the author of Luke in refutation of the Gnostics; but orthodox theologians should not, if they accept the Gnostic explanation of the story, pretend also to accept Luke's testimony about the event. If orthodox clergymen find it necessary to search for theories which will, somehow or another, enable them to repeat their ancient doctrine in a metaphysical sense because its ordinary sense can no longer be defended as true, let them, at any rate, have their "Articles of Religion" revised, for their real belief cannot by any means be reconciled with such a profession of faith as is laid down in the fourth of these Articles.

Already some Catholics are prepared, not indeed to alter their creeds or even to restate them, but to accept the new position by a new definition. If, so a learned Catholic theologian said, it could be proved that the body of Jesus rotted in his grave, even then the doctrine of the Resurrection would stand, "because we do not know in what the essence of a body consists."[2]

[1] Luke xxiv, 36–43.

[2] See "The Continuity of Catholicism," by Dr. St. George Mivart, in "The Nineteenth Century" of January, 1900. This interesting article shows how, though educated Catholics have ceased to believe in the Creation and Flood stories, the Fall of Man, the vicarious Redemption, and many other doctrines which were formerly enforced by the stake, the old Catholic doctrines remain unchanged. The words remain, though their meaning has gone. A nominal Catholic himself, but a convinced believer in honesty,

The ancient theological interpreters of mystical doctrines gave plain, prosaic, and material definitions to expressions which had been rhetorical, metaphorical, and spiritual. References to a spiritual re-birth were taken as references to an actual resurrection, just as if an historian who referred to some future regeneration of Europe after the Great War was taken to refer to a general rising from the dead of all those who lie buried on the battlefields. The new theological interpreters of ancient doctrines reverse the process, but at the same time insist upon retaining the plain words. The plain statement about a bodily resurrection they interpret as meaning something else—something indefinite, something too spiritual to be explained by words used in their ordinary sense.

Many of the most distinguished of the Church of England clergy take up the same attitude, and, realizing that a belief in the resurrection of Jesus cannot be supported by any evidence or any arguments of value, proceed to formulate new interpretations of the Church's doctrines—of those doctrines which have been so carefully defined and preserved for hundreds of years that there can be no doubt whatever as to what they always did mean. How such new definitions can be reconciled with those old meanings, or with the words of the Articles of Religion, or with the doctrines taught from most pulpits and in all confirmation classes, it is impossible to tell.

A learned Canon[1] wrote quite recently, in an article headed "Christ is Risen":—

> Firstly, the Church clearly does not mean that on the first Easter Day Jesus came to life again in the sense in

he records the far-reaching influence of modern knowledge and modern thought upon those who ostensibly still belong to the Catholic Church; and he believed—so it seems—that Catholicism would survive the entire destruction of its ancient beliefs. If any parsons or priests are unaware of what a body consists, they might with advantage to themselves consult a medical man or a manual of elementary physiology.

[1] The Rev. Canon Peter Green, in "The Nineteenth Century," June, 1922.

> which any one who accepts the truth of 2 Kings iv or St. John xi could say that the Shunamite's child or Lazarus came to life again. The Church does not, that is to say, teach that He returned to the ordinary conditions of earthly life.

It is not quite clear whether the Canon himself believes that these other persons were actually raised from the dead, as stated in the books to which he refers, but it is quite clear that he does not believe that Jesus was "raised from the dead" in the ordinary, or in the usually accepted, sense of those words. And this, indeed, he makes more clear when he summarizes his arguments. For he then states that Christian apologists may boldly declare their belief that Christ's body did not see corruption, but was changed "in the twinkling of an eye" into a new spiritual body, in which he rose from the dead; that His soul clothed itself with a new body so that He could truly say, "Handle me, and see, for a spirit [i.e., ghost] hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have"; that this body was not the same as that which hung on the Cross and was laid in the tomb, inasmuch as it could pass through doors which had been shut; that, though this body was a spiritual body and not the material body which had hung on the Cross, "yet we may say it was the *same* body, inasmuch as it was the expression and manifestation of the same personality."[1]

This, according to Canon Green, is "the Church's doctrine of the Resurrection," and is "neither doubtful nor incoherent." But, if the Canon is correct, why does the Church retain that Fourth Article of Religion?

Upon any other subject, such an argument as Canon Green's would be regarded as a series of meaningless quibbles. The body which, though different, we may yet call the *same*! The body which does not see corruption, but which is changed into something immaterial in a moment! The body which is spiritual, but yet can be handled! All

[1] The italics are the Canon's.

these things are unreal and meaningless. introduced without evidence or argument to support them, merely for the sake of saving the appearance of a doctrine, while giving up all that it originally implied, all that the words in which it is laid down explicitly state, all that every one has been taught to believe that it means.

How long will eminent divines continue to juggle with words in preference to acknowledging facts? How long will they continue to affirm their belief in doctrines which they really deny? How long will they continue to pile analogy on metaphor and ask us to accept the ensuing jumble of meaningless phrases as statements of facts?[1]

For the question to be decided is whether Jesus, having died, came to life again, and it is not answering that question, but merely evading it, to use figures of speech, ingenious epigrams, and poetic allusions which appeal to the emotions of the devout, but have no reference to the actual facts. Such sophistry may confuse the issue or hide it under a mountain of metaphors or a torrent of meaningless words, but it cannot conceal from any one accustomed to weigh words the fact that such arguments can be used only by those who no longer believe that Jesus was actually raised "from the dead."

The modern apologists always begin by asserting their recognition of the validity of the criticisms which have demolished the ancient foundations of their theology, and always end by asserting their unshaken faith in the validity of the conclusions to which that theology led. In a maze of rhetoric they lose the thread of logic, and at the end of their journey they ignore all those facts which they confessed at its beginning. For example, the "correspondent" who once a week contributes to "The Times" an essay on some religious topic writes thus about "Easter Faith":—

[1] It is curious to find this same Canon attacking and abusing Mr. Major and the other "Modernist" clergy who confess that they do not believe in the resurrection of the body.

> We need not demand a perfectly consistent harmony of the Resurrection narratives. Let it be granted that they contain certain difficulties we cannot solve. The fact they announce is that He who was crucified was not held captive by death, that He burst its bonds, and for ever lives true man in the fullness of His manhood, unimpeded by the frailties and limitations of humanity, in the exultant freedom of a glorious immortality. Why should this be incredible? Is not the evidence as full as we have any right to expect, as convincing as we can demand? Of course, faith is necessary to accept it, for this is not merely an event which took place nearly two millenniums ago—it is a fact of present power.....[1]

In other words, the evidence is unreliable, but, since we by faith believe that the event happened, we need not expect better evidence, but must be convinced by it, bad as it is. The witnesses are admittedly unreliable, but their evidence is to be taken as indisputable. And this though there are no other witnesses, and though the event prima facie is incredible.

"Why," the writer continues, "spend our time over theories of the mode of the Resurrection? Why engage in controversy about the relation of the body of flesh to the body of glory? These matters are beyond us." And, these matters being beyond us, he proceeds upon the assumption that they supply us with an assurance of victory over death, and of many other desirable things. In short, the difficulties of believing the doctrine are merely referred to and then ostentatiously ignored as of no importance whatever. Regarding the doctrine of the Ascension, this apologist and others of his school adopt the same method of glancing superficially at the reasons which compel most educated persons to reject it, of implicitly admitting the validity of those reasons, and of then proceeding to argue as if the doctrine itself remained entirely unshaken. Writing of "The Ascension: Attainment of the Ideal," he says[2]:—

[1] "The Times," April 15, 1922.
[2] "The Times," May 27, 1922.

> But it is not merely that we hear the announcement of the Ascension with little interest; we are indisposed to listen to any reference to Heaven or Hell. Men no longer think that these conceptions correspond with reality. They regard them as pictorial representations of the pictures of men's minds, without life and substance. Rejecting these images, they suppose that what they attempt to describe can have no existence.
>
> We are inclined to treat the record of the Ascension in the same summary fashion. But we cannot dispose of all that it certifies by the easy criticism that "going up" and "going down" to Heaven or Hell are terms to be relegated to the lumber room of a superannuated view of religion. This is but reaction adopting the language of enlightenment. After all, it is no sign of an open mind, no test of intellectual honesty, no pledge of moral insight, to deny the existence of that which is supernatural. Think of what disbelief or even agnosticism on this matter robs men. Without belief in another world than that of time and sense, we can find no certain meaning in the short span of life in this world, no result that can satisfy us of its purpose, no worthy denouement of its puzzling drama. What becomes of that which is already good, but not so good as it obviously can be—of that which is honourable, true, beautiful, and yet imperfect? Heaven stands for a possible perfection. The Ascension certifies the realization of that perfection in our manhood. What hope can be more reasonable than this? What unfaith so perverse as its rejection?

But the doctrine of the Ascension teaches that Jesus in his body rose off the surface of the earth, and floated up to a heaven above the clouds; and there is nothing perverse in rejecting the truth of that story if it is not an actual historical fact. All the talk about things which are honourable, true, and beautiful has no bearing whatever upon the question of whether the event actually took place; and there is no reason for supposing that men will be robbed of any noble ideals because they disbelieve something which never really occurred. If the writer had first given us some convincing reason for believing that this event did take place, he might then logically pass on to an examination of what it portended; but it is wholly illogical to reverse that

process and to tell us that, as it in his opinion portends future spiritual benefits, we must therefore believe that it occurred. He continues :—

> We are so bemused by things seen and temporal that we do not give ourselves time to reflect on that which is invisible and eternal. We forget that the material is but the surface veil of the spiritual, that what we see is not understood until we find in it an indication of the unseen. The Ascension would help to correct our lamentable obtuseness. It insists both on the reality of the spiritual order and on our manhood's concern with it. Heaven is disclosed as a life in which all that is good in man reaches its perfection ; that what is properly human has its consummation in the supernatural sphere, and that our hopes, our aspirations, our ideals, are not born to be cheated and mocked, but to flower into the largest and most complete fulfilment.
>
> All this and much more is implied in the ascent of the Son of Man. Here we find what man's life is worth, because it reveals what it is intended to become. It assures us that the ideal is the real, that all that is less than perfect truth, goodness, and beauty must be superseded by something higher ; that perfection is not only attainable, but permanent. Meanwhile we see how descent and ascent, when applied to spiritual realities, are conventions not to be interpreted as if they stood for nearness or distance. The supernatural order is ours now, around us, by us, in us. We may live in it here and now. Ascent is progress in that life. Descent is regress and deterioration in it. The Ascension is the attainment by the Perfect Life of its complete and enduring triumph.[1]

If these metaphors and this rhetoric have any meaning at all, that meaning has nothing to do with the doctrine of the Ascension as taught by Christian Churches for nearly two thousand years. When we turn to the more prosaic apologies of those clergymen who believe that by using pseudo-scientific jargon they will obtain a reputation for up-to-dateness, we find more explicit but even stranger explanations of what they really mean when they say " ascended into Heaven."

[1] See Appendix II for further comments on these articles.

Thus, Archdeacon Wilberforce, having first pointed out how absurd is the idea of the physical departure of a body through space, explained that the Ascension was an optical delusion, to which Christ resorted to show His disciples that He was disappearing into the "fourth dimension of space." Doubtless a few old ladies have been impressed by the reference to a "fourth dimension of space," but the ordinary educated man, however desirous of being reverent when he discusses other people's religious fancies, is compelled to smile, and inclined to retort "Bosh!" For, even if the hypothetical fourth dimension of space exists, it would be no more possible to disappear into it than it is possible to disappear out of length into breadth, or out of height into time. Moreover, why an optical delusion should be practised by Jesus upon His trusting disciples the Archdeacon never attempted to explain; which is hardly surprising, since the only explanation could be that He was a deceiver!

Let us turn to one more apologist before we conclude our survey of the methods whereby modern clergymen reconcile their retention of the doctrine with their rejection of the story on which it is based. Mr. Thorburn,[1] a strenuous opponent of the myth theories, having at great length argued that the Ascension story was not based upon any pre-Christian story of an ascension, nevertheless confesses that—

> What the writer of the Acts is primarily endeavouring to impress upon his readers is that Jesus, as the son of God and man, after his death and resurrection, passed over from this lower and material to a *higher and spiritual mode of existence*—i.e., to the Kingdom of Heaven or of God. And he expresses this *idea* in the only form in which he himself and his readers, for the most part at least, can grasp it—viz., a temporal and spatial one. And this mode of expression is still necessary to a very large extent even now-a-days. But, on the other hand, it is also true that

[1] "The Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels," by T. J. Thorburn, D.D., LL.D., pp. 323-9.

> there are in these times an increasing number of persons to whom the cruder symbolizations of spiritual truths are less necessary.[1]

Mr. Thorburn gives no reason why we should believe that the writer of the Acts meant a passage from a material to a spiritual existence when he described as an actual event a bodily ascension into the clouds, and does not even refer to the fact that the orthodox have always taught that Jesus actually did rise from the earth and go to Heaven through the clouds. He has, apparently, wasted much paper and ink in arguing that the story is not a myth, as he himself does not pretend that it is an historical fact. It is, indeed, the most striking thing about most of the modern Christian apologists that their arguments are directed, not to proving that these miraculous events took place, but to excusing the use of words which they no longer believe in their literal sense.

For Catholic priests and Protestant clergy are, in ever-growing numbers, being convinced by the arguments of modern historical and Biblical experts that the Gospels contain at any rate some modicum of legend mixed up with what may be history. Many of them already look upon Jesus in the same light as Strauss, Renan, Loisy, and other biographers of a non-supernatural Jesus regarded Him. They reduce the second person of their Trinity to the level of superior but otherwise normal humanity, and think of Jesus as a man who followed John the Baptist, and, after the latter's death, very successfully continued his work. They regard Him as a "prophet" who was induced by his disciples to go to Jerusalem in the character of the long-awaited Messiah, who aroused the hostility of the priesthood and of the wealthy Jews, whose disciples fled from him after his arrest, and who was put to death as a stirrer up of trouble among the poorer classes. They believe that in a moment of emotion a disciple imagined that he

[1] Op. cit., p. 328. The italics are Mr. Thorburn's.

again saw his Master, that the emotional contagion spread to other disciples, and that thus the story of the Resurrection arose, and thus Christianity started. Having arrived at this stage of Rationalism, it might be thought that they would repudiate their former creeds, founding, perhaps, a new creed upon the ideal humanity of Jesus, but at any rate no longer repeating, as truths of which they are firmly convinced, the formulæ of a Church founded upon a belief in His miraculous birth, resurrection, and ascension.

But no! instead of doing this, they retain their creeds and defend them either by the use, as we have seen above, of torrents of rhetoric without meaning, or by alleging a distinction between historic and religious truth. So they repeat ancient formulæ which they themselves confess to be devoid of meaning. "Christ is risen" merely means, so they say, that the spirit of Jesus has returned to influence the world, just as they might say of a new military genius, "He is Napoleon come to life again," or as they might say when Hamlet is produced in a modern theatre, "The spirit of Shakespeare lives with us again to-day," or when the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam suddenly sprang into popular fame, "Fitzgerald has come to life again," or "Omar has been raised from the dead." The spirit which had been forgotten while the body mouldered in the grave has returned to inspire new generations of men. And so too they repeat the old creedal phrase, "He descended into Hell, rose again the third day....."; and their congregations think they believe that nearly two thousand years ago God, in the form of Jesus, actually descended into the bowels of the earth—the place of the damned—and then returned to earth and life, though they really believe that Jesus is an ideal character invented by some unknown writers of fiction, and no more real, but much more praiseworthy, than Romeo or Shylock or Hamlet.

Priest and parson loudly lament their own waning

influence in the modern world, and impute to the wickedness of men the emptiness of churches and the popular indifference to the religion they provide. Perhaps they will one day recognize the fact that, if they are to regain their former influence and refill their churches, they must make their choice between pandering to ignorance and appealing to the truth, between words which arouse emotion among the superstitious and words which mean something to the educated, and between the knowledge of the twentieth century and the speculations of the second and third centuries. In the one case they will be the shepherds of a flock of uneducated females; in the other they may be the partners of all those persons of both sexes who are anxious to know the truth and to pursue wisdom and virtue. It is for the learned clergy to instruct and to guide their less well-informed colleagues, not fearing the angry fanaticism of the ignorant, but boldly proclaiming, in unambiguous language, the truth as they know it. If the clergy have any function to perform in a civilized community, it is to teach the truth, so far as it can be ascertained, about the universe and man's place in the universe, about reality, and about man's duty to his fellow men. It cannot be their duty to attempt to conceal from their congregations the facts which all educated men know.

PART II

OTHER NEW TESTAMENT MIRACLES

Chapter I

THE GOSPEL MIRACLES

It may, perhaps, be of assistance to those who are studying the Resurrection doctrines for the first time if a brief examination is made of the other miracles recorded in the Gospels. For it may be said that, as Jesus performed so many other miracles, His own resurrection from death is quite credible, even if it is not well authenticated. The ability to perform these miracles shows, it may be argued, that Jesus was not as other men, but One gifted with divine power, and thereby able perhaps to conquer death itself. Let us therefore turn our attention to the other miracles said to have been performed by Him.

It will be noticed that the majority of these miracles are cures, of which a large proportion are said to have been performed by the "casting out" of the devils who caused the disease from which the patient suffered. Jesus, if the evangelists correctly report his acts and words, believed, like most of his contemporaries, that illness and diseases were caused by the entry of demons into the body of the afflicted person, and, moreover, that these inflictions were imposed upon individuals as punishments for sins they had committed.[1] Either these stories were invented by the evangelists, in which case these authors are entirely unreliable, or Jesus not only believed that devils caused diseases, but was wont to speak to these devils, and able to cure the dumb, the blind, the lame, and the paralysed by ordering the evil spirits to leave their bodies. On one occasion,[2] we are told, "he rebuked the

[1] See, for example, Mark ii, 5.

[2] See Mark ix, 14–29, Matthew xvii, 14–21, and Luke ix, 37–42 for three very similar versions of this story.

foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou deaf and dumb spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him," and then the spirit came out of the dumb and mad boy, who was cured from that very hour. Then, when His disciples ask how it was that they had been unable to cast out this particular devil, He explains that "this kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting."[1]

Other devils appear, however, to have been more easy to exorcise, for in both Mark and Luke we read that soon after this dumb boy had been healed the disciples complained of some stranger who was casting out devils by using the name of Jesus, though he was not really a follower of His. Their Master expresses no astonishment at hearing of this feat, but tells the disciples not to interfere with the caster-out of devils. That the disciples should complain would not be surprising, as, according to the synoptics, Jesus had formally invested them[2] with authority to cast out devils—an authority which would appear unnecessary if casual strangers had the same power. Moreover, according to Matthew,[3] He had previously inveighed against persons who cast out devils in His name without authority to do so, saying that on the judgment day He would disown such "workers of iniquity." But the casting out of devils appears to have been regarded as of no great importance.[4] It is casually mentioned that Mary Magdalene had once had no less than seven devils cast out of her by Jesus,[5] but the event itself is not reported by any of the evangelists. As a general rule, the casting out of a devil is, as might be expected by any one

[1] Mark ix, 29. Matthew quotes similar words, but precedes them by a verse in which Jesus is reported as saying that it was lack of faith that prevented the disciples from casting out this devil, for if they had sufficient faith nothing would be impossible to them—even mountains would move at their command.

[2] Matthew x, 1, Luke ix, 1, and on two separate occasions according to Mark iii, 13 and vi, 7.

[3] Matthew vii, 21–3.

[4] Though Jesus apparently hesitated to perform this kindly action for the benefit of any Gentiles (see Mark vii, 24–30).

[5] Mark xvi, 9; Luke viii, 2.

conversant with the contemporary literature, referred to without any comments indicative of astonishment such as are called forth by accounts of such a miracle as walking upon the water. There is only one miracle of this kind which is referred to otherwise than very briefly. That, the most remarkable of all these miracles of exorcism, is described in all three synoptic gospels[1] as having occurred in the country of the Gadarenes.[2] According to Mark and Luke, Jesus was met by a man possessed by many devils; according to Matthew, he was met by two men possessed by devils. The three evangelists differ in their accounts of what was said and done, but they all agree in stating that Jesus conversed with the devils; and two of the evangelists state that Jesus asked the evil spirit his name, and was answered: "My name is Legion, for we are many"—or words to that effect. The devils then besought Jesus that if He should cast them out of the man He would permit them to enter into a herd of swine that were feeding on the mountains a good way off. Jesus grants them permission to do this, and they immediately quit their human host and enter the swine ("they were about two thousand"), who immediately dash down a steep place into the lake and are drowned.

So in this story Jesus, having conversed with the devils who inhabited a lunatic,[3] is described as wantonly destroying the valuable property of a man or men whom he does not know, and who have done him no harm, and as cruelly sending a large number of swine to a violent death at the request of some devils who preferred to enter the pigs rather than to be cast direct back into Hell. Either Jesus, having calmed the ravings of a lunatic, shared the

[1] Mark v, 1–20; Matthew viii, 28–34; Luke viii, 26–40. (It is worthy of notice that John does not mention these miracles of casting out devils.)

[2] Gergesenes according to Matthew. It appears probable that the original tradition was connected with a place called Gerasa. The Revised Version differs from the Authorised Version in the spelling of this name in all the Gospels, but the story is evidently based in all three Gospels on the same tradition.

[3] For the madness of the man is graphically described.

popular belief that the world was peopled by demons who could enter with equal facility into men or pigs, and by their presence madden their unwilling hosts, or the "inspired" authors of the Gospels accepted, without due inquiry, an erroneous tradition. If the first alternative is correct, Jesus must have been as ignorant as any of His contemporaries; if the second is correct, what guarantee have we that any of the other traditions the evangelists record are really true stories?

Except for the desire to display Jesus as a powerful worker of miracles, it is difficult to imagine why so unmoral a miracle should have been attributed to Him. The clue to this may be found, as many other clues to Gospel difficulties can be found, in contemporary pagan stories. The entry of the devils into the swine was apparently introduced to demonstrate the fact that the devils had actually left the man who had been possessed.

When Apollonius cast out a devil from the impious youth who had scoffed at his harangue about the wine cup which should be reserved for the gods, and not drunk out of by the communicants,[1] he ordered the devil to show by a visible sign that he had left the young man. So the devil said that he would throw down one of the statues in the king's portico; and the statue was immediately seen to totter, and then to fall down. The young man, who had previously been a licentious, luxury-loving, and mad-looking youth, then became an austere and philosophy-loving sage.

This story, related by Philostratus, is more moral than the Gospel story of the same kind, but in both of them there is an evident desire to explain what happens to the devil when he is forced to leave his victim; and doubtless the story of the Gadarene swine originated in the desire to demonstrate the destructiveness of evil spirits. It is, at any rate, far more probable that the story thus origi-

[1] The reference is to some pre-Christian communion service of bread and wine.

nated than that a benign and kindly God actually destroyed some men's swine by driving devils into them, so that they rushed down a steep cliff into the sea.

Another story, which is quite comprehensible as an ancient Eastern legend of what a god would do, is also quite incredible as a story of what the God of the Christian religion actually would have done. We are told[1] that Jesus, having come across a fig-tree which bore no fruit, cursed it, and that it almost immediately withered away. It is admitted that it was not the season of the year for figs to be hanging on fig-trees, so it cannot even be said that the fig-tree was cursed because it was not fulfilling its duty. Yet in a country where fruit-trees were regarded as particularly valuable—indeed, almost sacred—Jesus is said to have destroyed this fig-tree in a moment of petulance. Here, again, the context plainly shows that the story is introduced for the purpose of exhibiting Jesus in the character of an unusually powerful worker of miracles, and also for the purpose of asserting that by faith in the evangelist's story other persons would be enabled to perform even greater wonders. This, indeed, is characteristic of all the miracles. The people cured of their diseases are not said to have been selected for that favour on account of their moral virtues, but haphazard or because they had proclaimed their faith in Jesus. Out of the thousands of sufferers who must have been living in Palestine at this time, the few selected by Jesus to benefit by His capacity for performing miracles are said to have acquired that privilege merely by asserting their belief in His divine power.[2] If Jesus was a god walking upon the earth, would He not have chosen specially meritorious cases to treat, even if, for some unimaginable reason, He was unable or unwilling

[1] Mark xi, 12-14 and 20-6; Matthew xxi, 17-22.

[2] Note, too, how in the Acts (xiii, 6-11) Paul is described as miraculously striking Elymas blind for "seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith." The kindly miracles are said to have been performed to reward faith; the unkind to punish opposition to the new religion. The selection is made on the most approved ecclesiastical principles.

to cure all sick persons? In the account of another miracle,[1] in which Jesus Himself is depicted as acting in a manner more consistent with His ostensible character, we find the same curious idea of the way in which a divine being would use his omnipotence. For why should the angel who troubled the waters of the pool of Bethesda, by allowing only the first man who entered them to be cured, bring about an unseemly and brutal scramble, among the blind, the lame, and the paralytic, for first place?

Two hundred years ago a fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, summed up this angel's proceedings in some trenchant words with which few men to-day are likely to disagree :—

> An odd and merry way of conferring a Divine mercy. And one would think that the angels of God did this for their own diversion more than to do good to mankind. Just as some throw a bone among a kennel of hounds for the pleasure of seeing them quarrel for it, or as others cast a piece of money among a company of boys for the sport of seeing them scramble for it, so was the pastime of the angels here.[2]

In the "apocryphal" scriptures a host of other childish and petulant miracles are recorded of Jesus. He is not infrequently represented as punishing, by means of a miracle, those who had offended Him or shown disrespect to Him. That the Lord should say, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," seemed natural to the Jews, for men create gods in their own images; but in the course of time the ideal of kindliness and charity forced the idea of vengeance into the background, and accounts of angry acts and revengeful words disappeared almost entirely from the

[1] John v, 2-9.

[2] Thomas Woolston, "Discourses on the Miracles of Our Saviour," cited by Professor J. B. Bury, "History of Freedom of Thought," pp. 142-3. For his temerity Woolston was deprived of his Fellowship, fined £100, and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Unable to pay the fine, he remained in prison until he died. Thus were unorthodox views successfully and effectually suppressed for hundreds of years after the more drastic burning at the stake had fallen into disrepute!

biographies of Jesus.[1] Nevertheless, much remains in the Gospels which is quite inconsistent with the character supposed to be portrayed.

The miracle described in John ix is very remarkable from this and also from another point of view. Here we have a miracle of healing described just as our experience of such descriptions would lead us to expect—just, indeed, as hundreds of other "miracles" of faith-healing have been related at various times of divers people other than Jesus. The application of clay made of spittle—itself always supposed to have a wonderful efficacy in such cases—the order to bathe in a pool which had a name implying that people were sent to it, and the mass of second-, third-, or fourth-hand testimony (from the parents and neighbours of the cured person) to the occurrence of the miracle are all to be found in descriptions of corresponding cures by faith-healers.

There would be nothing extraordinary in such a tale being told of any one at any time in the world's history. But what is strange is that Jesus is reported to have said, in answer to a question by His disciples (verses 2–3), that the man had been born blind merely so that His own power could be exhibited—"the works of God made manifest"! Here was an opportunity to enlighten mankind on the great problem which has always excited its curiosity—the problem of the existence of evil. Had this man deserved his fate, so the disciples wished to know, by himself sinning, or was it possible that he was being punished for some sin committed by his parents? Yet Jesus, incarnate God, not only does not enlighten His listeners as to the origin of evil, but asserts that the man was afflicted with this terrible disablement merely so "that

[1] One is so apt to be misunderstood by those who do not wish to understand, and misinterpreted by those who wish to disparage, that it is necessary to add that it is not implied that Jesus did, as a matter of fact, perform childish acts of revenge. Our contention is that all the miracles—the petulant and the revengeful as well as the others—are legendary events with no historical basis whatever.

the works of God should be made manifest in him." Is it conceivable that a benign God should so afflict one of His creatures for such an object—mere self-glorification? Is it not much more probable that the story was invented, or at any rate that it was embroidered upon, and that the words were never spoken? The whole chapter, with its rhetoric and metaphors, so typical of John, is utterly unlike any episode recorded by the other evangelists. It is a very elaborate picture of Jesus claiming divinity for Himself as He never does in the other Gospels; and the detail about the miraculous effect of His spittle is introduced only incidentally.

But this is a very interesting detail, for the efficacy of spittle in working miraculous cures of blindness seems to have been for a long period in the world's history a prevalent belief. The curative effect of this secretion, when produced by divine or saintly persons, extended, it appears to have been thought, to deafness and kindred complaints. According to Mark viii, 22–6, Jesus cured a blind man by spitting on to his eyes and then laying his hands on them; and, according to the same evangelist (vii, 32–7), Jesus cured a man who was deaf, and also had an impediment in his speech, by putting His fingers in his ears, spitting, touching his tongue, and saying "Ephphatha," which means "Be opened." It is not clear from the account whether He spat in the man's mouth, or merely spat on the ground. Probably it is meant that He placed some of His spittle in the man's mouth.

There are numerous stories in later Christian literature of feats performed by saints by means of their saliva, of which, perhaps, the most remarkable is the story of St. Donatus, who is said to have slain a dragon by first making the sign of the cross and then spitting into the dragon's mouth. Apparently the sign of the cross was purely defensive, and it was the spittle that occasioned the death of the monster. St. Attalus, in 627, is said to have restored the hand of a child, whose thumb had been cut off,

by anointing the thumb with spittle, and then replacing it on the child's hand. St. Frances of Paula (1467–1507), by marking with spittle the places where the eyes and mouth should have been and then making the sign of the cross, instantly produced perfect examples of those features on the face of a child who had been born without them. Several other saints performed similar miracles, and of one of them, the seventh-century saint Valery, a quite modern Catholic writer[1] relates that he performed so many miracles by means of his saliva that if one wished to relate them all one would never finish.

The belief in the efficacy of saliva as a curative agent seems to be almost universal.[2] In a Buddhist story of this kind a holy man is said to have fetched four wonderful herbs from the Himalayas, and chewed them together in his mouth before applying the resultant juice to the eyes of a blind man whose sight he thus restores.[3]

Let us now turn our attention to another class of miracles—those which are neither moral nor immoral, but merely wonders. According to John,[4] the only recorder of this event, "this beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee"; and according to orthodox theory the turning of water into wine was the first of all the miracles performed by Jesus. The story begins, strangely enough, by describing Jesus as making an extremely rude retort to His mother when she draws His attention to the fact that His host has run out of wine; and it continues with an account of how Jesus orders six water-pots, of a capacity for two to three firkins apiece, to be filled to their brims with water, which He immediately turns into wine of the most excellent quality.[5]

[1] Besaucon, writing in 1854.

[2] The subject of this superstition is very fully treated in Mensignac's "Récherches Ethnographiques sur la Salive et le Crachat."

[3] Lillie, "Buddhism in Christendom," p. 175. [4] John ii, 1–11.

[5] Six water-pots, each containing from two to three firkins, would hold in all over a thousand imperial pints of wine—an enormous quantity to be consumed after the guests had already drunk up all their host's normal supply!

Now this story, first told in the latest of all the Gospels, if related of any other person and in any other book, would immediately be set down as a plagiarism of the myth evolved from the rites of Dionysos (Bacchus), whose priests used to make a pretence of turning water into wine in imitation of their god, whose normal duty was to make the rain water absorbed by the vines turn into grape juice. At one of the festivals held in honour of Dionysos at Elis, three flagons of water used to be locked up in a chapel, the doors of which were then sealed, and on the next day the doors were opened and the flagons found to be filled with wine. This festival took place on or about "twelfth night"—the same date as was afterwards assigned by the Catholic Church as the anniversary of the marriage at Cana.[1]

Note, too, that this miracle is said to have taken place on "the third day," whereas, according to the synoptic gospels, Jesus spent the forty days immediately succeeding His baptism fasting in the wilderness. That John's account involves a march of over seventy miles in less than two days is remarkable, but the disagreement between John and the authors of the synoptics is still more remarkable. In John's Gospel this miracle is introduced apropos of nothing, and the only rational explanation of its introduction is that the story was intended as a rival to the stories told about the older man-god, Dionysos.

It appears certain that some of the Christians imitated the Dionysian ritual, as Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons at the end of the second century and a great hunter of heretics, complained of a man, whom he calls a Gnostic, for performing miracles (or conjuring tricks) at the communion table, and turning water into blood-red wine which overflowed from the chalice. Eusebius (at the beginning of

[1] See Robertson, "Christianity and Mythology," pp. 329–30, for this and other examples of similar miracles performed by Dionysian priests. Doubtless they employed some trickery to do this feat of conjuring. In the mystery plays Dionysos was frequently represented as himself turning water into wine.

the fourth century), on the other hand, refers to such transubstantiations as genuine miracles, for he tells us of a similar event which took place within his own knowledge. Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, once found, so he tells us, that his lamps were failing for want of oil. He thereupon prayed over some water, which was immediately changed into oil and successfully used in replenishing the lamps.

In later days many saints are said to have changed water into wine. St. Francis of Assisi, of whom a great number of other miracles are reported, is said to have performed this particular one no less than three times during his life; and at least ten other saints have obtained credit for doing so.[1]

The belief that such a miracle is possible is so widespread that stories of its alleged performance are probably more common than stories of any other miraculous occurrence, and are occasionally reported even in these comparatively enlightened days. The Amir[2] of Asir,[3] for the purpose of obtaining a reputation among his subjects as a miracle-worker, used to, and perhaps still does,[4] turn water into blood (?) by the skilful manipulation of a small quantity of aniline dye. Doubtless the priests of many ancient and modern religions have used somewhat similar methods for deceiving the devout.

Another of the reported miracles which has no ethical value, but is common to many mythologies, is that of walking on the water. The simplest and probably the oldest surviving form of the Gospel story is that to be found in Mark vi, 47–51. In this Jesus is described as walking on the waters of the Sea of Tiberius (Lake of

[1] See Maury, "Légendes Pieuses du Moyen Age," for particulars and authorities.

[2] Mohamed ibn Ali El Idrissi. This chieftain, by means of rapid changes of "make-up," used to pretend to be able to transform himself into an old or a young man at will, and even into a negro or into a woman!

[3] In Southern Arabia.

[4] His death was reported in "The Times" some time in October, 1922; but the report was contradicted a few days later, so he may still be deluding, or amusing, the followers of the Prophet!

Gennesaret or Sea of Galilee) in the middle of the night. Matthew (xiv, 24–33) still further emphasizes the storminess of the weather, which Mark had implied as prevailing at the time, and he also adds an account of Peter leaving the boat and walking on the water towards Jesus. This incident is unnoticed by any of the other evangelists. To John (vi, 16–21) we are indebted for the further information that the distance Jesus walked from the land to the ship was between three and four miles, and for further assurance about the strength of the wind and the roughness of the waves.

The most striking thing about these three accounts is the casual way in which so marvellous an event is recorded. John, after he has related the story, makes no comment whatever upon it; Mark states that the disciples were "amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered"; and Matthew says that those in the ship declared that Jesus must be the Son of God.[1] But none of these three evangelists considered it necessary to offer any explanation why Jesus should select this method of joining the disciples, or to give us any details of how he walked so rapidly over so great an expanse of water. Ten verses are the most any of them spare to an account of this stupendous miracle, before passing on to describe some other event; and Luke does not even trouble to mention one word about it.[2] We find this extraordinary brevity inexplicable until we turn to the scriptures and myths of other religions, and discover that "walking on the water" was not regarded by men of those days as a feat sufficiently remarkable to require detailed descriptions.

According to the Buddhist scriptures,[3] a certain man who believed in the Buddha was enabled, merely by his

[1] A fact which had apparently never struck them before, in spite of the Virgin Birth and other miracles!

[2] Perhaps Luke, who seems always concerned in refuting Docetic heresies, was unwilling to relate a story which might lend support to the theory that Jesus was a phantom.

[3] The Dhammapada.

faith, to walk across the surface of a deep and rapid river on the further bank of which Gautama was preaching.[1] Of Zoroaster it is related that he was able to cross rivers dry shod. And Poseidon (Neptune) was said to have given his son Orion the power of walking upon the surface of the sea. And even in much later days similar stories were told and believed of various saints and notable personages. There is a celebrated picture, by Murillo, of St. Francis walking on the water. St. Hyacinth, St. Julian, and many other saints are also said to have performed this feat.[2]

The miraculous feeding of the multitude is another story which, in various forms, occurs in many religious histories and secular fairy tales. In the Gospels there are two versions of it, so much alike in all, except the numerical, details that they evidently refer to the same alleged event. According to the first story,[3] Jesus distributed five loaves and two fishes between 5,000 men, and twelve baskets full of fragments were left over after all these people had eaten their fill. According to the second story,[4] Jesus distributed seven loaves and a few small fishes between 4,000 men, and seven baskets full of fragments remained after their hunger was satisfied. Matthew, who always improves upon the stories he finds in Mark, adds in each case that there were many women and children besides the number of men mentioned by the other evangelists. In the first story it is implied that the multitude were very hungry before the miraculous feeding took place; in the second it is definitely stated that they had been three days without food; but in none of the versions of the story

[1] The stilling of the tempest which occurs when Jesus reaches the boat is also paralleled in Buddhist scripture. When a boat, in which his brother was in imminent danger of being shipwrecked, was boarded by Purna, one of the Buddha's disciples, the tempest immediately ceased, and the waters became absolutely calm.

[2] Some of these will be referred to in Chapter III.

[3] Mark vi, 35–44; Matthew xvi, 15–21; Luke ix, 12–17; John vi, 5–14.

[4] Mark viii, 1–9; Matthew xv, 32–8.

is any adequate or plausible explanation given for the concurrence of this multitude of people in the desert and far from their homes. In some it appears that the people had all come together from various places on the same day as the miracle took place. In others, that they had been three days in the desert without food before any question of feeding arose. This part of the story, though it involves nothing miraculous, is vague, contradictory, and improbable in every way. But when we turn to other stories of miraculous feeding we find that it always takes place in deserts, those dreaded expanses of waterless and foodless country which are so well known in the East as the scenes of deaths from starvation and thirst. If any one wished to tell a story which would exhibit his hero as a great worker of wonders, here was a well-known theme; and if the story was invented for this purpose, here is an explanation of that strange excess of miraculous power which is exhibited by the twelve or the seven baskets filled with superfluous food. Here was one, Jesus, who was greater than Elisha, who had merely fed 100 people with twenty loaves of bread and some full ears of corn.[1] Out of that comparatively ample ration something had been left over, but how much no one knew. Jesus would be described as feeding forty or fifty times as many people with one quarter the amount of food Elisha had used, and even then there would be left over more than he had to start with!

Elisha and his predecessor and duplicate, Elijah, had both of them miraculously multiplied a widow's cruise of oil. Elisha told his widow to borrow from her neighbours all available vessels, and to pour into them the oil from her own solitary pot; and it came to pass that the oil from this one little pot filled all the pots and vessels—"not a few"—that she and her sons had been able to borrow, so that by the sale of oil she was enabled to pay

[1] 2 Kings iv, 42-4.

all her debts and live in comfort with her sons for the rest of their lives.[1]

Elijah, having for a long time been fed twice a day with bread and flesh brought to him by ravens, was ordered by God, when his water supply dried up, to go and dwell with a certain widow. On his arrival at the city where she lived, Elijah found that his hostess had nothing left in her house except "an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruise," and that she and her son proposed to consume this small provision of food, and then await death from starvation.[2] But a miracle was performed, and it was ordained by God that the barrel of meal should not waste, nor the cruise of oil fail, until He ended the famine.[3]

In the myths connected with other religions similar tales are to be found. The army of Dionysos is miraculously fed in the Libyan desert;[4] Bharata and an immense army of elephants, cavalry, and infantry are said to have been miraculously fed by the hermit, Bharadwaja;[5] and Mohammed is said to have multiplied a quantity of dried dates.

In later days many similar miracles were said to have taken place. A St. Mary of Egypt is alleged to have lived for forty-eight years on three small loaves of bread. So that St. Corentin could sustain his life without performing any labour, God was said to have sent him a little fish, which lived in a fountain. Every day the saint cut off a small portion for his meal, and threw the remainder back into the fountain, where the fish immediately became whole again.[6] Many of such stories are connected with

[1] 2 Kings iv, 1–7.

[2] For the Lord God of Israel, having been grossly provoked by Ahab their king, had inflicted a famine of several years' duration upon His people, the Israelites.

[3] 1 Kings xvii, 1–16.

[4] See Robertson, "Christianity and Mythology," pp. 335–6.

[5] See the Ramayana.

[6] Albert Legrand's "Vies des Saints de Bretagne," cited by Maury, "Légendes Pieuses," pp. 187–8. Maury gives the names of more than a dozen saints who are reputed to have multiplied loaves, and of half-a-dozen

tales of prolonged fasts, and miracles of fasting were commonly attributed to saints as well as to the holy men of ancient times. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus are each said to have fasted for as long as forty days; but a shorter period of complete abstinence from food and drink is usually assigned to modern saints. St. Albert, however, is said to have lived for twenty-two years without taking any nourishment whatever, and it seems that this saint must be the holder of the record for fasting. Miraculous fasts and miraculous provision of food are the commonplaces of folk-lore and mythology.

Another Gospel miracle which is full of interest to students of mythology and folk-lore is described by Matthew[1] alone, about Jesus telling Peter to cast a line into the sea so as to catch a fish in whose mouth would be found the tribute money[2] that had been demanded by the tax-gatherers. This curious story has many parallels in ancient and medieval literature. One, which is to be found in the Talmud and also in the official commentaries on the Koran, relates how Solomon lost and recovered his signet ring. He was in the habit of entrusting this royal seal to one of his concubines named Amina, while he was bathing; and on one occasion a devil named Sakhar appeared in Solomon's form to Amina and obtained the ring from her. Sakhar thus became possessed of the kingdom for forty days,[3] at the end of which time he threw the ring into the sea and departed. The signet was swallowed by a fish which was caught and given to Solomon, who, finding the ring in its belly, thus recovered his kingdom.[4]

saints who multiplied supplies of wine. In Brewer's "Dictionary of Miracles" many examples are to be found, and many others are sprinkled over the various Lives of Saints written by devout Catholics. Some of these will be mentioned in Chapter III.

[1] Matthew xvii, 24–7.

[2] Worth about eighteen pence at the present price of silver.

[3] The departure after forty days was presumably because all this took place as a punishment inflicted upon Solomon because he had allowed one of his ladies—wife or concubine is not clear—to commit some act of idolatry.

[4] See Sale's "Al Koran," chapter xxxviii, note on pp. 308–9, vol ii.

Another tale of much the same kind was told by the Arabs about Haroun Al Raschid ; and the same motif is to be found in British folk-lore. For example, a Scotch woman having accidentally dropped her wedding ring in the Clyde, her husband suspected her of giving it to a lover. To clear herself of this suspicion, the lady invoked the good offices of St. Kentigern, then Bishop of Glasgow, and that pious prelate arranged that a salmon should restore the lost ring. The Bishops of Glasgow thenceforth bore on their coat-of-arms a salmon with a ring in its mouth.[1]

Numerous fairy-tales deal with the same theme, which would naturally recur to any author who had heard one of the many true stories of money, rings, and ornaments of other kinds, often found in the bodies of man-eating crocodiles, and occasionally found in the gullets of fish.

From such real events but very little imagination is required to evolve a story of fish deliberately finding and returning rings, or of people expecting to find a needful coin in the mouth of the first fish which is caught.[2] As regards Matthew's unfinished tale, the most remarkable thing from the religious point of view is that miraculous powers should be said to have been used for an object so trivial. But this is one of the curiosities of evangelically

[1] The Rev. Dr. Dibdin, quoted by Moule, "Heraldry of Fish," pp. 125-6, tells the story as follows : "They report of St. Kentigern that a lady of good place in the country having lost her ring as she crossed the river Clyde, and her husband waxing jealous, as if she had bestowed the same on one of her lovers, she did mean herself to Kentigern, entreating his help for the safety of her honour ; and that he, going to the river after he had used his devotion, willed one who was making to fish to bring the first fish that he caught, which was done. In the mouth of this fish he found the ring, and, sending it to the lady, she was thereby freed of her husband's suspicion."

[2] In Moule's "Heraldry of Fish" many quaint stories of this nature are to be found, and one delightful bit of ecclesiastical history and natural history combined. It is stated (p. 124) that the Abbot of St. Peter's, Westminster, used to claim and receive an allowance of fish on the plea that St. Peter had, *at the time when he consecrated that church*, granted the tithe of all salmon caught in the Thames ; and it is also stated that the cause assigned for the eventual disappearance of salmon from the Thames was that the fishermen had not made their due offerings to St. Peter—or his successor !

reported miracles. These supernatural powers of which the evangelists tell us are not used for the purpose of benefiting all mankind, nor even for the purpose of convincing, by some outstanding marvel, all men of the divinity of Jesus, but for some comparatively childish purpose, or to perform actions which, according to the Biblical authors, many human beings had previously performed. The stories are unconvincing not so much because they are miraculous, but because they are, to every reader of ancient and medieval literature, so exceedingly commonplace as well as so comparatively trivial. Those who have studied the histories of ancient nations, and of religions other than their own, say to themselves when they read the Gospel miracles: "We have heard stories of this kind told of many other persons, human, semi-human, and divine. What reason have we for believing these stories rather than those?" The evidence for the occurrence of the Gospel miracles is the evidence of one or two or three or four unknown authors writing long after the events are alleged to have taken place. These authors differ from one another in their reports of many of these miracles. They frequently do not agree as to the time when and the place where the miracle is said to have occurred. Sometimes one evangelist describes an episode in great detail without making any mention of a miracle which another evangelist describes as occurring on the very same occasion. In some cases one evangelist states that of a multitude of sick persons *all* were healed, whereas another states that only *some* were healed.[1] And some of the miracles are evidently events described by ignorant men. We have already discussed the casting out of devils as one such class of miracles. The eclipse of the sun described in all the synoptics[2] as taking place during the last stage of the Crucifixion is another such event described by men who

[1] For details of many of the irreconcilable discrepancies between the evangelists see "Encyclopædia Biblica," article "Gospels," § 137.

[2] Mark xv, 33; Matthew xxvii, 45; Luke xxiii, 44–5.

were apparently ignorant of natural laws. For the Crucifixion is stated to have taken place immediately before the feast of the Passover, and therefore when the moon would be almost full—a time when the astronomical conditions necessary for an eclipse of the sun cannot occur. But doubtless to the authors of these books all eclipses were miracles, and there was nothing more wonderful in one taking place at any one particular time rather than at any other. Moreover, as Gibbon, in a celebrated passage, pointed out, there is no contemporary evidence for the occurrence of this eclipse, though it is alleged to have taken place in circumstances which would certainly have led to its being recorded by Roman historians if it had really occurred.[1]

Let any one who desires without prejudice to judge of the probability of this event ask himself which is the more

[1] "But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, dæmons were expelled, and the laws of Nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the Church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and, pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral and physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman Empire, was involved in a praeternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history. It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence, of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of Nature—earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses—which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe. A distinct chapter of Pliny is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration; but he contents himself with describing the singular defect of light which followed the murder of Cæsar, when, during the greatest part of the year, the orb of the sun appeared pale and without splendour. This season of obscurity, which cannot surely be compared with the praeternatural darkness of the Passion, had been already celebrated by most of the poets and historians of that memorable age."—"Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," last paragraph of chapter xv.

likely—that the author of the original story upon which the three synoptic gospels are founded was mistaken or misinformed or romancing, or that the sun was eclipsed by some supernatural and unique method, and no news of the event reached the ears of those who made it their business to hear of and record such wonders.

Virgil concludes the first Georgic (written about 37 or 36 B.C.) with an account of the prodigies that attended the death of Cæsar—earthquakes, ghosts walking about the earth, supernatural voices, animals that speak, rivers running backwards, floods overwhelming villages, wells spouting blood, statues that weep, thunder, lightning, meteors, and comets.[1] The historians of the period doubtless considered it proper to declare that the death of their heroes had been accompanied by celestial and terrestrial signs and wonders.

There is one more miracle which is worthy of study as an example of the kind of thing commonly reported in ancient days, though not only unsupported by any evidence worthy of credence, but also contradicted by subsequent events. It is related[2] that on the day of Pentecost "cloven tongues like as of fire" descended upon the disciples, who were there and then immediately gifted with the ability to speak all foreign languages. Yet, in spite of this marvellous and extremely useful endowment, we subsequently hear of Peter requiring the services of an interpreter.

The gift of tongues was, so the devout Christians of the early ages believed, and so we learn from the Epistles and

[1] In Dryden's translation the passage begins :—

> The sun reveals the secrets of the sky ;
> And who dares give the source of light the lie ?
> The change of empires often he declares,
> Fierce tumults, hidden treasons, open wars.
> He first the fate of Cæsar did foretell,
> And pitied Rome, when Rome in Cæsar fell ;
> In iron clouds concealed the public light,
> And impious mortals feared eternal night.

[2] Acts ii.

from the writings of the Church Fathers, given to many during the first few centuries of Christianity ; but this was done, apparently, with but little discretion as to its distribution by the Holy Spirit, since the most painstaking missionaries seemed to have lacked that inestimable aid in their labours.[1]

This descent of the Holy Spirit with the gift of tongues is the first post-Gospel miracle which is recorded. Numerous other miracles are said to have been performed by the apostles after the death of their Master; and, as we shall see later, innumerable miracles are said to have been performed by other holy men and saints throughout the long period that elapsed between the foundation of Christianity and the rise of the scientific spirit of inquiry and accuracy. That these miracles failed to convert those who witnessed them seems indisputable. The Jews, who must have been spectators of these wonders, were the most bitter opponents of Christianity. It was the pagans of other countries and the Christians of a later age who were convinced that they occurred, and they heard of them only by tradition. The authors of the Gospels attempt to explain the incredulity of the Jews by alleging that Jesus used to give directions that His miracles should not be spoken of,[2] that at times He could not or would not perform miracles because of the unbelief of those present, and that He was unwilling to give " signs " to satisfy the curiosity of the onlookers. These explanations are given, though in other places the evangelists say much about the fame of the miracles and about the multitudes that followed Jesus so as to benefit by His miraculous cures. It has often been the case that, when unbelievers ask for signs, miracle-workers are impotent. The spirits of the dead

[1] E.g., "The knowledge of foreign languages was frequently communicated to the contemporaries of Irenæus, though Irenæus himself was left to struggle with the difficulties of a barbarous dialect whilst he preached the Gospel to the nations of Gaul."—Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," chapter xv, citing Irenæus's book "Against the Heretics."

[2] E.g., Mark v, 43.

refuse, so it is said, to inspire mediums when a sceptic is present. In post-apostolic days it was explained that the unwillingness of the Deity to produce proofs of His divinity is due to the fact that miracles would reduce the necessity for faith and aggravate the guilt of the unbeliever. But it has never been explained why faith dependent on ignorance should be better than knowledge derived by reason from evidence. The priests of every religion have pleaded with men that they should have faith in the doctrines they taught. They would find no necessity for pleading for faith if they could appeal to men's reason. An appeal to faith is a confession that the doctrines are indefensible by rational argument. Moreover, true faith is not a belief in past history, but hope for the future of mankind.

Chapter II

THE MIRACULOUS IN ANTIQUITY

Modern men and women, if they have not studied ancient literature, may be inclined to think that such miraculous events as are recorded in the Bible could not have been reported unless something unusual had occurred; but if they turn their attention to the books of ancient pagan authors they will discover that their pages are more often devoted to myths and to miracles than they are to the sober facts of history and science. The orderly processes of nature were unknown to most of the ancients, and events of all kinds seemed to them to be caused by the intervention of deities and demons who controlled everything. Medicine, magic, and miracles had much the same meaning for men of the first century A.D. When their relatives were ill, they did not send for a doctor, but for a priest or a magician. The cures attributed to Æsculapius, "the Father of Medicine," were spoken of as miracles, and not attributed to medical knowledge. The healing of diseases by the laying on of hands, or the casting out of devils as it was often called, was regarded as miraculous, but as no more so than any other method of healing.

The philosophers of Greece and Rome already distinguished between theology and medicine, and between demonology and diseases; but the general public in these and all other countries was firmly convinced of the value of charms, incantations, and other magical devices for the expulsion of devils, and the consequent cure of illnesses. Some of the spells contained the name of the miracle-worker's god;[1] and others depended for their efficacy

[1] Sometimes the sacred or secret name of the god was used, but frequently the Jews conjured demons by invoking "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac,

upon the names of such divine beings as angels and archangels.[1] So the question as to "in what name" the devils were cast out, and the accusation, "He casteth out devils through the prince of devils," are just what we might expect to find in the works of an author of that period, though the assertion that a divine being spoke of diseases as being caused by devils is no longer credible, now that we know a little more about disease than men did in those days.

Epilepsy, with its very sudden and violent manifestations, was always a special source of wonder to the ancients. The Jews and many other races considered that epileptics were possessed by an evil spirit, but some nations called it "the sacred sickness," and believed that those who suffered from it were inspired. All considered it to be a sign of either a divine or a devilish visitation, and, as such, peculiarly within the province of priests and holy men.[2]

During the first two or three hundred years of the Christian era the casting out of devils was, we learn from the Christian writers of those times, not at all an uncommon event. The miracle was performed in a public place, and with much ceremony; and it appears that the demon exorcised on such occasions was usually heard to confess that he was really Jupiter, or Apollo, or some other pagan and therefore fraudulent god, who had been engaged in deluding the heathen! However hard we try to find a charitable construction for such events,

and of Jacob." Origen, Justin Martyr, Celsus, and other authors, refer to the numerous itinerant Jews who offered, for small fees, to cast out devils.

[1] Others, again, were formed of quaint jumbles of letters, anagrams, words that were spelt the same backwards or forwards, and all that kind of thing.

[2] In many parts of the world it is still believed that illnesses, and more especially mental illnesses, are caused by evil spirits; and the thaumaturge still practises his trade in many places inhabited by men who are in the same culture-stage as that reached by the Jews two thousand years ago. In West Africa, East Africa, Samoa, and parts of Asia, ceremonies which are supposed to exorcise the demons of disease occasionally take place even now.

we cannot escape coming to the conclusion that frauds, perpetrated, of course, from the most "pious" motives, were continually practised upon the credulous public.

Later on the Catholic Church devised elaborate ceremonies and a regular ritual for exorcising demons. The patient, bound hand and foot, was brought into church with a priest's stole tied round his neck, and was drenched with holy water. The sign of the Cross was repeatedly made, long litanies were recited, and the imaginary devil or devils were addressed in the most insulting terms that could be thought of.[1] Directions were given in the rubrics as to the treatment of cases, which were apparently, as might be expected, very frequent, in which the devil returned after having been successfully expelled at the first ceremony. Doubtless all this ceremonial with its power of vivid suggestion sometimes effected an apparent and temporary cure, especially as the ceremonies were generally preceded and followed by drastic treatment of other kinds—blows, cold-water douches, fasts and other remedies, which would leave the patient utterly exhausted and quiescent.

Even in England, and in comparatively recent times, lunatics were subjected to all kinds of evil treatment designed to exorcise demons. They were flogged and ducked in ponds until almost, and sometimes quite, drowned, while prayers were said over them for the purpose of driving out the devils which possessed them. The doctors who ventured to surmise that it might be pressure on the brain or other natural causes which were responsible for the misfortunes of the patient were called Atheists and persecuted. For, as the orthodox justly maintained, if lunatics were not possessed by devils, either the scriptures were false or Jesus spoke untruths.[2]

[1] See White, "Warfare of Science with Theology," for a list of the curious expressions of contempt used at such ceremonies to insult the devils.

[2] This argument was made use of by Archbishop Trench and others, who believed that the patients in lunatic asylums were "possessed."

Those who said that Jesus must have shared the misconceptions of his age and been mistaken in this matter were reviled as unbelievers, for believers were bound to maintain that Jesus was divine and therefore could not be mistaken.

Stories of successful exorcism by various saints and ecclesiastical dignitaries are innumerable. Some of them are exceedingly quaint. A bishop of Beauvais in the fifteenth century, for example, not only cast out five devils from one person, but actually compelled them to sign a deed promising never again to molest that particular victim; and the Jesuits of Vienna once made a boast that they had, between them, cast out no fewer than 12,652 devils from human beings whom they were injuring!

The Reformation cleared the ecclesiastical atmosphere of some of its grossest superstitions, but this superstition was retained by all the reformers. Luther, in 1528, wrote: "The mad, the lame, the blind, and the dumb are men in whom demons have established themselves. Doctors who treat infirmities as if they had natural causes are ignorant men who do not know the power of the Devil."[1] John Wesley, two hundred years later, stated that "most lunatics are really demoniacs," and in 1739 he assisted, so he himself tells us, in the expulsion of a demon from the body of a young girl. In 1788, publicly and with great ceremony in Bristol church, seven clergymen solemnly exorcised the devils which they believed to be inhabiting the body of a drunken epileptic named George Larkins.

As lunacy was regarded as a punishment deliberately inflicted by God, it was thought that it must be a sign of wickedness, and madmen were consequently often treated with the greatest brutality. Moreover, as these matters

[1] When educated men pronounced such sentiments as these it is not surprising that medical science was in Europe for hundreds of years practised only by Jews, and seriously studied only in the Mohammedan schools at Cairo and Baghdad. See Draper's "Intellectual Development of Europe" for history of medical science during "the Age of Faith" in the West.

were especially within the province of clergymen, they did not regard any outside treatment with favour. The casting out of devils was made a monopoly of the Church. Unlicensed persons were forbidden to perform this lucrative act, for the ecclesiastical authorities knew well that, without some such legal prohibition, amateur exorcisers would have set up in practice all over the country.

The vast strides made in medical knowledge and the growing spirit of scientific scepticism, during the last half of the eighteenth and the whole of the nineteenth century, almost entirely swept away the last vestiges of this ancient superstition; but it still exists in a few uncivilized regions of the earth's surface, and even crops up occasionally in places supposed to be civilized. Missionaries and clergymen whose minds are yet untouched by modern thought periodically report stories of the alleged casting out of devils.

In 1918 a Chinese Methodist pastor named Zi was, with much wealth of detail, reported to have cast out a devil from a young married woman named Li Tsong, who lived in a village called Zen-Lien. This woman, who had been raving for about three weeks, was, it is said, addressed by Mr. Zi as follows:—

"What is your name?"

"My name is Li," was the reply.

"No," said the pastor; "I know who you are; you are the devil."

"I am not," angrily answered the patient; "I am the true God."

Zi and his followers having offered up prayers, he addressed "the evil spirit": "In the name of Jesus Christ, I order you to come out of her." Immediately the woman fell upon the floor as if dead; but she soon revived, and sat up speaking sanely and normally to her friends, cured of her raving.

According to the accounts rendered by the missionaries, this event resulted in a large number of conversions!

Such a story related as a miracle by a priest of any other religion would be received with derision by all educated persons, but because it is said to have been performed by a Christian it is accepted by many without any further inquiry, on the second or third hand evidence of an unknown Chinaman; and was fully reported, solemnly, seriously, and without comment, as an item of real news, by many leading newspapers!

Later still, nearer home, and even more widely advertised, a similar example of clerical superstition occurred. In 1922 a faith-healer is said to have cast a devil out of a woman in Scotland. The operation took place in St. Andrew's episcopal cathedral in the presence of a crowded congregation, and, according to the local newspaper,[1] the Very Reverend Provost, who was, with other clergy, present on the occasion, declared that "this was a case of demoniacal possession, and now the devil has been cast out from this poor woman." The poor woman is said to have continued shrieking incoherently after the exorcising was completed; but her friends and relatives may perhaps rest assured, on the authority of their minister, that the lady's incoherent ravings are no longer caused, as before, by so unpleasant an occupant of her body as a devil! If, by exciting the emotions of a congregation until the men and women who compose it become, as these appear to have become, wildly hysterical, even the canny Scotsman of the twentieth century can be induced to credit such superstitions, is it surprising that, in ages when all men were ignorant of the pathology of mental diseases, demoniacal possession was generally believed in?

An even more remarkable example of the survival of the grossest superstition is furnished by the following report which was published in "The Times" of March 27 of this year (1923):—

[1] "The Dundee Advertiser."

Martha Bennett, wife of an employee at the Farnborough Aircraft Factory, was committed for trial at Aldershot yesterday, charged with the manslaughter of an illegitimate nurse child, aged two months.

Dr. E. Bindloss said he was of opinion that the child's death was caused by mechanical interference with the breathing, and that contusions on the face might have been caused by a hand placed over the mouth. He admitted that they might have resulted from inexpert massage. When he questioned defendant she remained dumb, and her husband said that "the Lord had sealed her lips." The husband added: "The child had fits, and fits are caused by demons or devils. My wife and I prayed for hours to the Lord to cast out the devils, and at last our prayers were answered. The devils went, and in leaving caused those marks."

Giving evidence, the husband said that the child had had many fits. When they found it was dead, he and his wife prayed for forty hours that it might be raised to life again.

The defendant pleaded "Not Guilty," and said she had not injured the child in any way.

Those who deprecate the criticism of popular superstition should learn a lesson, if such people ever learn lessons, from these proceedings. For the beliefs of this engineer and his wife are, after all, beliefs very natural to those who imbibe, without any seasoning of doubt, the teachings of orthodox Christianity. The things which they believed to have occurred and the things which they hoped would occur were merely those which are said, in the Gospels, to have occurred and to be possible. They had been taught to accept every text in the Gospels as inspired truth, and every saying of Jesus recorded in those books as the actual words of God. They had doubtless read in one place[1] the words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the

[1] John xiv, 12–14.

Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." And in many other places[1] they had doubtless read similar assurances. The devout and well-meaning people who teach religion do not themselves believe these things. They, of course, do not think that because they believe in Jesus they can drink poison with impunity, and be bitten by cobras without fatal results. But they should remember that they are teaching men and women who really do believe what they are taught to believe, and who are likely to push to their logical conclusions doctrines which have no logical premises.[2]

In the Middle Ages, when men honestly believed that what they called faith (that is to say, a belief in the story that they taught) was so important that untruthfulness was not only excusable but even laudable if it served to strengthen faith, many tales were told of men who swallowed poison unharmed because they drank in the name of the Holy Trinity, or of the Virgin Mary, or even of some minor saint. They even invented stories to illustrate the truth of the words alleged to have been spoken by Jesus: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you."[3]

For example, it was related of St. Gregory the thaumaturge that, on being challenged by a pagan priest to perform a miracle, he commanded a rock as big as a mountain to "remove hence to yonder place," and that the mountain immediately obeyed. He thus, it is said, converted the priest of Apollo, his wife, his children, his servants, and a number of other people, to Christianity.[4]

[1] E.g., Mark xi, 23-4, xvi, 17-18; Matthew vii, 7-8, xvii, 20, xxi, 21-2; Luke xi, 9-10, etc.

[2] See Appendix III for latest example of clerical imposture.

[3] Matthew xvii, 20.

[4] St. Gregory is said to have subsequently caused another large hill or mountain to move itself out of the way so as to make room for a church; and on yet another occasion to have caused a lake to disappear. These

But, in the twentieth century, surely no one will maintain that it is desirable to teach doctrines which the teacher does not believe. Surely in the twentieth century it is necessary not to encourage but to eradicate ancient superstition; and, though some people may differ from ourselves as to what is superstition and what is truth, it is certain that no educated person still believes that by prayer and faith resurrections from the dead can be brought about! The priests of many ancient religions used to claim that faith in their own particular God would always bring about, or had frequently brought about, cures of diseases. Faith-healing under religious auspices must be one of the oldest forms of delusion or suggestion.

At Epidaurus inscriptions written hundreds of years before our era have been found recording cures brought about by the intervention of the god Asclepius or Æsculapius, the great god of healing. One of these runs as follows:—

> Euphanes, a child of Epidaurus, suffered from the stone; he fell asleep, and the god appeared to him. "What will thou give me if I cure thee?" asked he. The child replied: "Ten knuckle-bones." The god laughed, and said he would cure the child. On the following day it left the temple cured.[1]

The Buddha is said to have performed many miracles, and since the death of Gautama thousands of miracles have, so it is said, been performed by his adherents, Buddhist monks, and Buddhist kings. It is, of course, no peculiarity of the Buddhist religion that monks and kings were credited with miraculous powers. In all countries, and according to the records of all religions, it

stories were deliberately told as miracles. The events are said to have happened instantaneously; and it is no excuse for the inventor of such stories for apologists to say now that they may have been founded upon some true story of a slow engineering undertaking. St. Gregory of Nyssa was the recorder of these wonders worked by his namesake.

[1] Quoted from Reinach's "Orpheus," p. 93.

was not only divine beings but also sages, holy men, and great rulers who were credited with the capacity for performing miraculous cures.

When Apollonius visited the sages of India he is said to have witnessed many miraculous cures which these wise men performed. The afflicted arrived at the place where the sages dwelt, and were introduced to them like patients visiting their doctor. A devil who afflicted a mad boy was duly dealt with by these holy men on the occasion of Apollonius's visit, a man who had had both his eyes put out had the sight of both of them immediately restored, and various limbs were healed of their injuries without any difficulty or delay. All these wonders are related by one who was so far enlightened as to believe that the virus of venomous creatures could be used as an anti-venine.[1] The alleged miracles of Apollonius gave rise to many controversies between the respective supporters of rival religions. Accusations of exaggeration and lying were freely bandied about, and the unprejudiced reader of the arguments or assertions of both parties can find no logical reason for preferring one set of stories to another, or for believing that one party of biographers were better judges of historical truth than the other.

Hierocles, the author of a treatise called "The Love of Truth," discussed the evidences brought forward on behalf of the miracles attributed to Apollonius of Tyana and Jesus of Galilee respectively, so that people might compare the "accurate and well-established judgment" of the Apollonians with "the easy credulity of the Christians." The Christian witnesses were, according to him, "liars, and devoid of education, and wizards"; the Apollonian witnesses were "men of the highest education, who out of respect for the truth and their love of mankind" gave publicity to the actions of a noble man. Naturally,

[1] See Philostratus's "Life of Apollonius," book iii, chapters xxxviii, xxxix, and xliv.

Eusebius and other Christian writers retorted with the same accusations of "easy credulity" and wizardry, claimed that the mere name of Jesus was more efficacious in the exorcism of demons than Apollonius himself, and argued that even if Apollonius did perform miracles he did so with the co-operation of a demon.[1]

To those of us who know that diseases are caused by microbes, by the misplacement of organs, and by other pathological but natural mishaps, and not by the entry of supernatural beings into the human system, these controversies appear as absurd as do the controversies of children and the irrational squabbles of ill-informed politicians. For the protagonists do not refer to indisputable facts, nor do they attempt to base their arguments upon some common denomination of agreement. They do not strive to bring forward further evidence as to the historicity of the events about which they dispute, but they argue by hurling disparaging statements and unproved assertions one against the other. Moreover, they do not apply the same criterion of truth to their own stories as they apply to those of their opponent.

Eusebius, for example, criticises the Apollonian legends with much acumen, pointing out contradictions and absurdities of many kinds; but he remains silent with regard to, and offers no explanation of, the almost identical contradictions in the stories which are told about Jesus. He points out that Damis gives detailed accounts of events which took place when he himself was not present, but he omits to explain accounts similarly given in the Gospels of events which are said to have taken place when all the disciples were absent. The life of Apollonius, as related by Philostratus, is indeed replete with absurdities, and the semi-divine hero is represented as a boastful and pedantic prig; so we are most of us likely to agree with Eusebius in

[1] See "The Treatise of Eusebius," chapter ii; translated in Conybeare's edition of "Apollonius," vol. ii.

regarding the biographies of Jesus as vastly superior to those of Apollonius.[1] But, with respect to the miracles ascribed to both of these persons, there seems to be nothing to choose between the two stories. The evidence for their occurrence is far less good than is the evidence for the occurrence of the next miracle we shall consider.

The Emperor Vespasian is reported by two of the most celebrated Roman historians[2] to have restored the sight of a blind man, and also to have cured a cripple, in the temple of Serapis at Alexandria in the year 69 A.D. These two miracles are described in great detail as having taken place in public and as having been extremely well attested. The Emperor is said to have been most unwilling to test his powers of performing miracles, and to have been induced to do so only by the urgent entreaties of the priests of Serapis.

These miracles are recorded by two men who were living at the time they are said to have occurred, and who both occupied high official positions and had access to historical documents of which they made use in their own chronicles. Yet, in spite of this comparatively trustworthy evidence, we do not believe that Vespasian performed miracles; for we have learnt from our study of the works of ancient and medieval authors that they all succumbed to the temptation to raise gossip to the rank of history, and to credit, or at any rate to report, without adequate inquiry, rumours of the most incredible events. Even though Tacitus was on the whole freer than most ancient authors from these defects of historical judgment, we do not accept his testimony as sufficient to convince us that a miracle occurred. We consider it more probable that the priests of Serapis performed a trick, or that the Emperor's courtiers indulged in some flattering propaganda, or that some misunderstanding

[1] Apollonius must have been either singularly unfortunate in his biographers or a very conceited and rather foolish old pedant.
[2] Suetonius and Tacitus.

gave rise to the story. The story once told would be readily credited in that age, when followers of every religion believed in the constant occurrence of miracles; and contemporary historians would repeat the well-known tale.

Everybody, except a few highly educated philosophers, believed that all phenomena were governed by arbitrary supernatural beings, and the Christians were just as ready to believe in pagan miracles as in their own, though they attributed them to demoniacal instead of to divine action. Christian writers of the first century relate that Simon Magus could make himself invisible or take the shape of various animals; that he had formed a man out of air, and performed many other astounding miracles.[1] Many other opponents of Christianity had among the Christians a similar reputation as miracle workers.[2]

Early in the fourth century Constantine established Christianity, and, before the fifth century had closed, the ancient schools of philosophy were suppressed by the triumphant Catholic Church. From thenceforth, for hundreds of years, the natural credulity of man was to be unadulterated by any leaven of philosophic scepticism. The ancient folk-lore and legends of the Hebrews were raised throughout Europe to the rank of inspired records whose accuracy it would be blasphemy to question; and a constant stream of new miracles, reported by ecclesiastics and believed in by all laymen, scoured away any particles of rational doubt which might otherwise have obtained lodgment in men's minds. To these medieval miracles we shall turn shortly, but it may be of interest to notice how the miraculous was treated by the first scientific historian.

In that storehouse of amusing anecdotes and useful information, Herodotus's history, we learn how, according

[1] See Draper, "The Intellectual Development of Europe," vol. ii, chapter iv, for some of these reported by Clemens Romanus and Anastatius Sinaita.

[2] E.g., Iamblichus and Proclus.

to the Athenians, the gods revenged themselves upon the men who had been sent to Egeria to carry off the wooden idols which had been set up in honour of the divinities, Damia and Auxesia. It was said that, as soon as these men had tied ropes to the images and began to attempt to haul them down from their pedestals, thunderclaps were heard, an earthquake took place, and the men, being seized with madness, attacked each other until all were slain save one.[1] Now Herodotus, though relating this story as one current in Athens, does not accept it as reliable history. He tells us that the probable origin of the tale was that the Argives attacked the Athenians, as they were engaged in removing the wooden statues of their gods, and defeated them during a thunderstorm which coincidentally took place.

It is unfortunate that the Jews did not produce a contemporary philosophical historian to treat in a similar way the origins of the miraculous stories recorded in their traditions. The story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who, according to the Old Testament,[2] were first swallowed up by an earthquake and subsequently consumed by a fire[3] because they dared to criticise the pretensions of the God's priests—a far less grave offence than actually laying hold of the gods, as the men did at Egeria—surely required a little explanation. It would be interesting to hear the comment of some historians living closer to the events about the actual facts which gave rise to the story of the fall of the walls of Jericho at the blast of trumpets,[4] though we can make what is probably a very close guess at the actual

[1] Herodotus v, 82–7. The survivor was killed by the Athenian women when he returned to Athens unaccompanied by their husbands. Perhaps these ladies considered that the survivor was in some way to blame for the disaster. They could hardly have been so cruel as to determine that if they had lost their husbands their more fortunate sister should also lose hers; though the story seems to imply this!

[2] Numbers xvi.

[3] These are evidently two distinct stories, unskilfully combined into one. Modern scholarship has disentangled the two stories. See "Encyclopædia Biblica," art. "Dathan and Abiram."

[4] Joshua vi, 20.

occurrences. For, when studying ancient literature such as the Old Testament books, we must, if we are to appreciate it, constantly bear in mind the fact that ancient authors did not aim at historical accuracy but at "colour."[1] The modern historian relating the events of a campaign searches archives, collects the written orders of generals, compares the despatches of the commanders on both sides, studies maps and plans, and if possible the ground itself, and then attempts to show exactly what movements were performed at each hour of the day and the result of such movements. The ancient historian had no such sources of information as "orders" and "despatches," and the only archives he could consult were sculptured memorials vaunting the successes of kings. He wished to glorify his countrymen, not to demonstrate the principles of strategy and tactics.[2]

So, when describing the campaign against Jericho, all he tells us is that the priests blew trumpets, the people shouted, and the walls of the city fell; and, using hyperbolic expressions, he implies that the fall of the walls was brought about by the blowing of the trumpets and shouting, when the destruction was probably really brought about by the usual military methods after a successful assault. By later generations thirsting for the miraculous such

[1] Ezra and his scribes would doubtless have agreed with Francis Bacon that "a mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure"; but we, even though we fully realize that by the word "lie" Bacon here designates those embellishments which add to the picturesqueness of history—"the lie that passes through the mind" and not "the lie that sinketh in"—are not likely to take so pessimistic a view as he did of the result of eliminating from men's minds "vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like" (see Bacon's essay "On Truth"). We prefer, and nowadays we generally obtain, our fiction and our history in separate books, and not confused together as of yore in one volume. Our historical canvasses are sufficiently crowded with picturesque real incidents without the addition of any imaginary ones.

[2] There are a few notable exceptions to this; and to men of rather later date, such as Xenophon, and later still Cæsar, who describe their own campaigns, these remarks do not, of course, apply. But the Book of Joshua was not written until hundreds of years after the events which it describes are alleged to have taken place, and Joshua himself is referred to in the third person.

hyperbole and allegory is interpreted literally. If an historian had spoken, in modern slang, of some one being "run off his legs," the miracle of a man running so fast as to leave his body behind him would have been believed, and attributed to the power of the god worshipped by the native or tribe.

It would be interesting, too, to have a description, written by a more scientific historian, of the battle which gave rise to the story of the Supreme God causing the sun to stand still while his chosen people completed the massacre of their enemies. All we know about that story is that it must have been written by some one who himself believed and whose readers believed, as of course all men did then, that the sun circled daily round the earth, and that the omnipotent deity who controlled it was a blood-thirsty being who took pleasure in the slaughter of the people whom He had not chosen! According to this story,[1] not only the sun but the moon also stood still while the slaughter proceeded. Were it not for this, apparently excessive, display of the miraculous, the event recorded in 2 Kings xx, 8–11 and Isaiah xxxviii, 7–8 would be even more marvellous. For, according to those stories, the sun not only "stood still" but went back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz, merely for the sake of assuring King Hezekiah that Isaiah, who had cured him of a boil after telling him that he was going to die of it, spoke the truth when he subsequently told him that he would live another fifteen years. To the Jews of the fifth century B.C.—when these stories were probably composed—such an event as the stopping of the sun would be regarded as a miracle merely because it had never or only very rarely happened before. A globe of light that was drawn daily across the sky for the benefit of mankind could easily be drawn back by the God who controlled it. They could form no conception of what would be really

[1] Joshua x, 12–14.

involved in a sudden retrograde rotation of the earth such as would be necessary to make the sun appear to go backwards. The results that would inevitably ensue, were such a thing to be possible and to happen, beggar imagination. It is perhaps fortunate that, in answer to Isaiah's question recorded in 2 Kings,[1] Hezekiah did not reply "Both"; for Isaiah gave him the option of either a retrograde or a forward movement, and Hezekiah chose the retrograde movement because he thought it a small matter for the sun to go forward ten degrees at a bound. His reply may have saved the whole world from disaster, for it could hardly have survived two such gigantic wobbles! The other Biblical miracles are all mere trifles compared with these jugglings with the elements of the solar system. Yet we are still, in the twentieth century A.D., asked to believe that they took place.

We know that stories of animals who, like Balaam's ass, speak to their masters are to be found in the folk-lore of many races; and that, if the traditions of primitive races are to be believed, Jonah was not the only person who lived in an animal's stomach for several days.[2] In olden times all nations and every tribe had stories of this kind enshrined among their national legends, and no basis of fact was required before such fairy tales became embodied in alleged histories. Such mythical events were accepted as history by the masses of the people, but were not credited by philosophers even in the time of Herodotus; and now none of them are credited by any one save only—for an inexplicable but quite inadequate reason—those related by the ancient Hebrews.

Under the influence of philosophy, educated Romans

[1] In Isaiah the story is told somewhat differently.

[2] For example, there is a Papuan story about a great fish swallowing a whole family together with their boat. The wood of the boat was used to make a fire on which the family cooked portions of the fish's liver until it died (see Frazer's "Folk-Lore in the Old Testament," vol. iii, chapter xviii). According to a Zulu tradition, several people were swallowed by an elephant, and consumed its liver until it eventually died (see Callaway, "Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus," vol. i, p. 332 *et. seq.*).

had been gradually discarding the fables about their own national gods[1] when, at a stroke of the pen, Constantine established an organization whose business it was to teach that a great number of miracles, including many archaic examples enshrined in the sacred literature of the Jews, were indubitably true. More than a thousand years were thenceforth to elapse before other historians as circumspect as Herodotus dared to express doubts of the truth of this new set of miracles. The miraculous was re-established more firmly than ever, and even when a new religion arose its devotees found it necessary to invent miracles which would rival those of its great competitors.

Many miracles were recorded of Mohammed. Though he himself never laid claim to having performed any, his disciples were less discreet and more credulous than himself, and we thus have another proof of the way in which the followers of every prophet of olden time claimed, without any reason, that their Master had performed supernatural actions. Who can doubt that, if the Koran had not so early and so faithfully been preserved from corruption, all these miracles would have been incorporated into Mohammed's text, and that Mohammed, in spite of his repeated denials of divinity, would have been raised to the rank of a god?[2]

The story of the "Seven Sleepers of Ephesus," to which we have already referred,[3] must have been heard by Mohammed during his journeys in Syria, as it appears in the Koran as a divine revelation. With his gift for romance, Mohammed could not accept the fable without improving upon it. He adds a dog to the noble company

[1] Superstition was evidently waning when the cultured Romans could appreciate the story of the carpenter who, finding on his hands a piece of wood unsuitable for any useful purpose, fashioned it into a god to whom, after the lapse of a few years, supernatural powers were attributed; and that story was told long before the time of Constantine.

[2] See Gibbon, "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," chapter L, for some of the most marvellous miracles said to have been performed by Mohammed.

[3] See Part I, Chapter II, pp. 71–2.

of sleepers; he asserts that the sun altered its course twice daily so as not to shine upon and awaken the sleepers; and he also assures his readers that God Himself turned over the sleeping bodies every day, so that their flesh would not putrefy by pressure in a constant position.[1] He also approximately doubles the length of the sleep. This is an interesting example—though fragmentary—of the growth of a legend.

In every country, and in secular as well as in religious history, stories of miracles formed the mainstay of tradition. Even in British history, which does not start until comparatively recent times, the miraculous abounds. The celebrated sorcerer Merlin is one of the most prominent figures of early Anglo-Saxon history. Among his other great feats he, by the power of his enchantments, transported Stonehenge from Ireland, whither giants had originally borne the stones from Africa, to Salisbury Plain. Enough stories, however, have now been repeated to illustrate the commonness of the miraculous in antiquity, so we will turn our attention to the miraculous in the Middle Ages, and see how, until quite recent days, the report that a miracle had taken place did not necessarily mean that anything uncommon had really occurred.

[1] Like a poultry keeper and the eggs in an incubator! According to the Koran, it is doubtful whether there were three sleepers and a dog, five and a dog, or seven and a dog. It was not for Moslems to dispute about this matter, and they were certainly not to ask the Christians for information!

Chapter III

MEDIEVAL MIRACLES

When, after the "Reformation" had taken place, Christendom was divided up into numerous rival and hostile sects, and was no longer entirely ruled by the autocratic head of an omnipotent Church, men began to question some of the innumerable stories of miracles which that Church had accepted as true. Up till then it had been believed by all Christians that a vast number of miracles had occurred not only in pre-Christian and in apostolic times but constantly right up till their own day.

The later miracles were as well or better attested than those described in the New Testament, but when once men had, by discarding their allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church, obtained the liberty to examine some of her teachings by the light of reason, it was immediately discovered that the truth of many of these miraculous occurrences was open to grave doubts. Having accepted the Canonical books of the Bible, the Protestants did not presume to inquire into the truth of the miracles described in those books, but they did venture to inquire into the truth of the post-apostolic miracles, and the more they inquired the more they doubted.

The evidence for the occurrence of the medieval miracles is greater in quantity and better in quality than the evidence produced for the occurrence of the Biblical miracles, for distinguished authors of saintly biographies assure us that to their own personal knowledge many of these marvellous facts were performed by their heroes, or quote the names of contemporary writers who vouch for

the truth of these miraculous events; whereas the Bible miracles were recorded long after the alleged events had taken place, and recorded by authors whose identity is unknown. The Protestants, who found that there was no good reason for believing in the ecclesiastical miracles and many excellent reasons for disbelieving them, could distinguish between them and the Biblical miracles only by assuming that the latter were supernaturally vouched for. That assumption was therefore made, and the doctrine of the Verbal Inspiration of the Bible was raised to a prominence which it had never held in the eyes of the Catholics, who relied upon Papal authority for decisions upon what was and what was not to be believed. The doctrine of Inspiration could, however, no longer be sustained when commentators discovered that the books of the Bible contained much that was incompatible with known facts and much else that was self-contradictory. No Protestant theologian of any standing now pretends that the words of the Bible were divinely dictated or are infallibly true. They may maintain with reason that much of it is beautiful, but they can no longer argue that the mere fact of anything being recorded in the Bible renders it undoubtedly true. The scriptures of almost all religions are said by their respective adherents to have been miraculously written or dictated by their god or by his accredited messengers, and the Mormons actually claim to have received their laws direct from Heaven in the middle of the nineteenth century. From the point of view of historic reliability the books accepted for the Canon of the Church differ from the later religious literature of the Catholics principally in the fact that the authors and the dates of the later books are known, and of the earlier books unknown. The events described in both classes of books are of the same nature, for the medieval literature is as full of wonders and miracles as the Biblical literature is. Every miracle recorded in the Bible has its counterpart in the ecclesiastical history of later years, and many even

greater wonders are recorded as historical events.[1] The fables, the fairy tales, and the folk-lore of all countries, between them contain no greater wonders than the stories solemnly related by ecclesiastical authors as proof of Divine intervention in favour of Christian believers, and these stories were credited by all Christians until sceptics, having won the first battle of free-thought and free-speech, laughed away such legends as nursery tales incredible to grown-up persons.

Some of these stories had a modicum of ethical intention, but to thousands of them no possible moral meaning can be attached, unless the repetition of phrases from a liturgy, or submission to ecclesiastical authority, or faith in the saints, can be regarded as in themselves virtuous.[2] A robber who always repeated an "Ave Maria" before committing a theft, and who prayed to the Virgin Mary that he should not die in sin, had his legs supported for three days and nights by a beautiful virgin while he hung on the scaffold, so that he was not strangled but eventually escaped with his life. And a parrot which had learnt from its pious mistress to repeat the words "St. Thomas have mercy upon me" was immediately released from the talons of a hawk when it repeated this holy prayer.[3] St. Bernard excommunicated the flies which infested one of his churches, and they immediately fell down dead and were swept out of the church in baskets-full. Of this great saint, the preacher of the second Crusade, it is

[1] The most celebrated collection of such stories is "The Golden Legend" of Jacobus de Voragine (Archbishop of Genoa in the thirteenth century). Many are related by Baring Gould in his "Lives of the Saints." A very good epitome is to be found in "The Dictionary of Miracles," by the Rev. E. Cobham Brewer, LL.D.

[2] A boy who had robbed a monastery was struck dead by God, and when his body was buried the consecrated ground threw it up again; so great was the crime of stealing when the victim of the theft was a monk or a monastery! That was the kind of moral taught by many of these stories.

[3] Illustrations of the "magic effect of formula," as Mr. A. C. Howland justly remarks in his chapter on "Medieval Christianity" in "Religions of the Past and Present" (Lippincott Co., U.S.A.).

reported that he used to perform twenty or thirty miracles every day, including the cure of many terrible diseases. St. Catherine of Siena's father confessor declared that he had seen that saintly lady transform herself into a man with a beard on his chin, and the appearance of Jesus Christ. St. Rose as a child refused to attend to her lessons, and consequently grew up totally unable to read or to write; but, having been converted to a more godly frame of mind, she prayed God to teach her those arts, and immediately found that she was able to practise both to perfection. At the prayer of St. Benedict, while yet an infant, the broken parts of a stone sieve came together again and were made whole. Later on in life, when his monks attempted to poison him, the cup containing the poison broke as soon as he took it into his hands; and on another occasion of the same kind a raven flew away with the poisoned loaf. The sanctity of St. Francis was rewarded in a signal manner. Two years before he died in 1226 marks of the same wounds as Christ had received on the Cross appeared on his body. A growth which resembled nails appeared in the palms of his hands and on the soles of his feet, and blood and water issued from a wound in his side. Many other holy men are said to have displayed these Stigmata, or signs of the Cross, upon their bodies; and it appears that it was at one time not at all uncommon to find pious mottoes engraved in letters of gold upon the hearts of dead saints.[1]

St. Dominic, the twelfth-century founder of the Dominican order, had been, we are assured, as great a worker of miracles as his subsequent rival St. Francis. On one occasion he was present when a nun formed the wicked resolve to leave her convent and return to the world. As a punishment for such impiety, the all-seeing Father,

[1] Irreverent "infidels" might suggest the practice of tattooing as an aid to such displays; but how will they explain the celebrated fish caught, comparatively recently, off the east coast of Africa which, we are assured, displayed a verse of the Koran written in the natural markings of its scales?

from whom no thoughts are hidden, caused her nose to drop off her face. But the saint, taking compassion upon her, offered up prayers and replaced her nose, which was immediately joined again to her skull, where it remained as if nothing had happened to it—a standing proof that the omniscient and omnipotent Creator will change His mind if a saint prays to Him!

To modern minds such miracles as these appear not only incredible but as very strong evidence of the credulity of ancient times, and of the frivolity of the ecclesiastical minds which conceived them. Let us now turn to a class of miracle which served the useful purpose of providing food for the body as well as sustenance of such inferior kind for the mind.

St. Brigit of Kildare (430–523) is said to have caused a cow, which had already been milked twice on that same day, to yield three more large pailfuls of milk for the benefit of several bishops who had unexpectedly called on her. Even on the fat pastures of Kildare, and in these days of two-thousand-gallon cows, this would be a miraculous performance! St. Sorus (500–580) made three barrels of wine from three grapes. St. Hermeland, in the year 718, miraculously produced a lamprey from the Loire, when lampreys were unknown, and fed a whole monastery upon its flesh.[1]

St. Maidoc of Ferus, in 632, taking compassion upon six hungry wolves, presented them with six fat sheep to eat, and then—after the wolves had consumed them—reproduced the sheep fat and well back in their fold. Thus did this kindly man satisfy the hunger of the wolves without permanently injuring the sheep. History does not relate whether the latter suffered any temporary inconvenience; but the biographers of saints are always remarkably chary of details! This miracle is rather like one of those said to have been performed by St. Blaise.

[1] There are very many other examples of a single small fish providing food for a multitude.

A poor woman complained to him that her only pig had been carried away by a wolf. St. Blaise comforted her by promising that the hog would be returned, and sure enough shortly afterwards the wolf brought it back uninjured.[1] This story demonstrates the wonderful power of saints over animals—a power which is even better illustrated by the celebrated story, related in so many books compiled by devout Christians, of the death of Paul the hermit in the year 342.

St. Anthony, whom Paul wished to preserve from the pain of witnessing his death, had been sent away to fetch the mantle of St. Athanasius, a relic kept in a neighbouring convent. As he was returning with the mantle, he beheld a company of angels, prophets, and apostles, bearing the soul of Paul to Heaven, and, on entering the hermit's cell, found the dead body of his friend kneeling in prayer with its hands stretched towards the heavens. Finding that he had neither the strength nor the tools with which to dig a grave, he prayed to Christ for help, and presently two lions appeared who twisted their tails round the dead body, drew it out of the cell, and, having scratched a deep hole in the ground, lowered the body into it and covered it with earth. The lions then approached St. Anthony wagging their tails[2] and shaking their ears. They licked his hands and feet, and plainly gave him to understand that they required his blessing. This he gave before dismissing them with the sign of the cross.

Hundreds of other stories used to be told of the miraculous power of saints and holy men over wild animals; but two more examples should suffice to show the kind of thing believed in by all men in olden times. A hermit named Zosimas was once travelling to Cæsarea when a

[1] Even if we give credit to the saint for playing a kindly trick upon the old lady, the fact remains that the story was told, and for hundreds of years believed, as a genuine miracle evidential of the supernatural power of this holy man, and of the possibility of other miracles.

[2] The narrator of the story had evidently not distinguished between feline and canine methods of showing emotion!

lion sprang upon his donkey and killed it. When the lion had finished eating the beast of burden, Zosimas remonstrated with him, saying that he would now be unable to continue his journey as he was an old man and unable to carry his own luggage. The hermit, having thus explained to the animal how greatly his greed had inconvenienced him, ordered him to set aside for the time being his natural ferocity and to act as his porter, which the lion in the most friendly manner proceeded to do. With the luggage on its back the noble animal accompanied the hermit to the gate of Cæsarea.[1]

Among the many puerile stories told about St. Francis of Assisi is one of how he cured a wolf of hydrophobia and made it promise him never again to eat any sheep.[2] These stories were not related as fables, but as facts. They were told and believed as examples of the power of true believers over wild animals, and of the miracles worked by God in favour of hermits and other holy men. The story about St. Anthony and the lions was also related as an historical fact. Our first authority for the story is St. Jerome (345–420), a "Father of the Church," and he tells it as an example of the many miracles which bore witness to the truth of the doctrines he preached.

This same great authority for Christian doctrines, St. Jerome, also tells us of another example of miraculous feeding. St. Hilarion, he relates, was once followed by

[1] The story is told by Evager, "Ecclesiastical History," book iv, chapter vii.

[2] The "Book of the Conformities of Christ and St. Francis," which contains accounts of this and of many other miracles performed by the founder of the Franciscan order of monks, was once extremely popular. The curious ideas which medieval ecclesiastical writers had about what was right and proper are well illustrated by another story it contains. It is said that by prayer St. Francis brought about the death of a doctor so that by further prayers he could demonstrate his power of bringing him to life again. Incidentally, this resurrection illustrated the superiority of theology over medical science! Another story which carried with it an excellent moral from the clerical point of view recounts how St. Francis visited the corpse of a woman who had died suddenly after refusing to attend his services, and commanded it to tell him where the soul of the woman was. The mouth of the dead woman immediately opened and cried in a terrible voice: "I am in Hell."

3,000 disciples into a vineyard which usually yielded 100 measures of wine. The saint blessed the vineyard, his followers ate their fill of the grapes, and the harvest that year, which took place twenty days later, was over 300 measures of wine in spite of the quantity of grapes eaten by the saint's congregation. Moreover, the next-door vineyard, whose owner had refused to allow this crowd to enter it, yielded a much smaller crop of grapes than usual, and these never ripened.

St. Richard, Bishop of Chichester in 1253, fed 3,000 poor persons with one loaf of bread, and afterwards found that he was left with sufficient to feed another 100. It is said that he frequently performed this kind of miracle. Many other saints and holy men multiplied food miraculously, so as to satisfy the hunger of their followers and to feed the poor during times of scarcity.[1] St. Cuthbert, who was consecrated Bishop of Lindisfarne by the Archbishop of Canterbury in York Minster in 685 and died two years later, is the most famous of the English saints who received divine food. An angel is said to have brought him from Heaven some loaves which "surpassed the lily in whiteness, the rose in odour, and honey in taste." The Venerable Bede (673–735) compiled a biography of this saint, and also makes frequent references to him in his "Ecclesiastical History." He assures his readers that he heard all the stories he relates from men of the most truthful and simple dispositions, who had themselves witnessed the miracles performed by St. Cuthbert. So here we have tales told by a celebrated historian who wrote but a short time after the alleged occurrence of the events he describes, and the assurance of a very saintly man that he had obtained the best first-hand evidence for what he relates. Moreover, the events are said to have taken place, and the history was certainly written, at a time when, and in a country where, stories

[1] E.g., St. Isidore, John Grandé, St. John Francis Regis, and St. Clara.

of incredible marvels were far less common than they were a few hundred years earlier and a good many hundred miles further east. The testimony to the miracles of St. Cuthbert is therefore far more reliable than the testimony to the Biblical miracles, though it is no better than the testimony advanced for many miracles said to have been performed by French, Italian, and other Continental saints, for these too are borne witness to by well-known persons living at or near the time and place where the wonders took place. According to Bede, St. Cuthbert, among other "signs of spiritual excellence," was distinguished by his capacity for casting out devils and for restoring to life and perfect health, by his mere touch, those who were on the point of death. He changed water into wine, he saw the souls of people being received into Heaven, he was obeyed by the wild birds, and otters assisted him to dry himself after he had spent the night in prayer standing in the sea. The waves obeyed him, and even assisted his building operations by bringing timber and placing it in the correct position. And after his death his sepulchre, his clothing, and relics of his person were found to possess the power of casting out devils and of performing other miracles. Moreover, his body and his clothes were found uncorrupted when his grave was opened several years after his death.[1]

The Venerable Bede is our principal authority for the

[1] In one account ("The Life and Miracles of St. Cuthbert," chapter xlii) Bede says nine years after the saint's death; in another ("Ecclesiastical History," book iv, chapter xxx) the author states that it was eleven years after death that the grave was opened. The Venerable Bede seems to have been specially interested in cases of prolonged incorruption of the body. In his History (book iii, chapter xix) he gives an account of the discovery of the uncorrupted body of the celebrated Irish monk, Fursey, who had been buried four years earlier. This Fursey had, during his lifetime, visited Hell and been severely burnt on the shoulder and jaw by a burning body which some devils threw at him. It appears that the scars were still visible when Fursey died, and even four years later. In book iv, chapter xix, we read that the body of the inordinately chaste Queen Ethelreda was found sixteen years after her death to be "as free from corruption as if she had died and been buried that very day," though a wound in her jaw had completely healed since she died.

occurrence of another very interesting series of miracles. He tells us that Alban, the saint after whom the town of St. Albans was named, was brought before the Roman governor of the district when the latter was "offering sacrifice to devils"—by which expression our saintly author of course means that the governor was performing the ordinary religious rites of the Romans. Alban, with the extraordinary lack of tact which is so conspicuous a characteristic of saints, immediately informed the governor that it would be his lot to "receive the everlasting pains of Hell for his reward" as a worshipper of pagan deities. Thereupon the governor ordered St. Alban to instant execution. On their way to the place where the sentence was to be carried out, Alban and the executioners found the bridge over the river blocked by crowds of people. "St. Alban, therefore, urged by an ardent and devout wish to arrive quickly at martyrdom, drew near to the stream, and on lifting up his eyes to Heaven the channel was immediately dried up, and he perceived that the water had departed and made way for him to pass." When he reached the top of the hill where he was to suffer death, he prayed for water, and immediately "a living stream broke out before his feet." As soon as the fatal blow had been struck, the eyes of the executioner dropped out of his head and fell upon the ground together with the blessed martyr's head.[1] This all took place, if our historian is to be believed, near the city of Verulam on June 22, 305 A.D. A church was afterwards built there, and became celebrated for the wonders and cures which were worked in it. Thus did St. Alban earn his title of saint, although he had persecuted the Christians up till a few days before his death, and been converted to Christianity only when called to account by the Roman governor for harbouring a Christian clergyman whose life he had been led to admire.

[1] Bede's "Ecclesiastical History," book i, chapter vii.

The conversion theme is, as might be expected, often interwoven with stories about miracles. In the year 496 Clovis embraced the Christian religion, and all the Franks were immediately baptized in a body. For the purpose of this ceremony a white dove flew down from Heaven bearing a vial of holy oil; and at the subsequent coronations of every king of France this vial (the Sainte Ampoulle) was always used to contain the oil, still renewed from celestial sources, which was required for the consecration.

Overjoyed at the conversion of so illustrious a personage, the supernatural Powers showered favours upon Clovis and his troops, and a series of miracles ensured their victory over the Goths.[1] For the Goths, though Christians, were Arians, and did not accept those doctrines, said to have been formulated by St. Athanasius in the fourth century, which now form the basis of most Christianity. They were, therefore, in the eyes of the Catholics and presumably of the supernatural Powers, heretics, and even worse than heathens. On returning from his campaigns, the bloodthirsty but pious Clovis[2] repaired to the shrine of his "expensive friend," St. Martin of Tours, and offered a hundred pieces of gold for the purpose of redeeming his favourite war-horse which he had left there in pawn. It was, however, found that the charger was enchanted, and could not be released from his stable until the gift was doubled.[3]

How such stories as these originated, and what foundation of fraud was behind them, we can easily guess; but a great number of the miracles recorded in ecclesiastical history could have had no basis of fact whatever, and must

[1] For an account of these miracles see Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," chapter xxxviii.

[2] He had murdered all the princes of the rival dynasty, but his devotion to the Church was undoubted.

[3] 206 of St. Martin's miracles, which appear sometimes to have been extremely lucrative, are recorded by pious and credulous—or untruthful—biographers.

have been the pure inventions of fanciful historians, who desired to glorify the faith which they professed. The feat of walking on water was, as we have already seen, performed—according to the ancients—by several persons besides Jesus. According to the hagiologists, it was also performed by a great number of saints. The following are typical examples of such stories.

St. Nazarius and St. Celsus, condemned to death by Nero, were cast out of a ship into the sea several miles from any land. Immediately a violent storm arose, and the crew of the ship appealed to the saints, whom they, to their astonishment, saw walking upon the waves, to save them. The saints prayed, the storm abated, and the ship returned to shore, with the saints walking behind it on the surface of the waters. We are not surprised to hear, from Simeon Metaphrastes, the original relater of this story, that the crew were immediately converted to Christianity, though we may legitimately wonder how it is that no contemporary historian refers to this wonderful event.

St. Aldegundis (630–689) fled from her father's house to avoid marriage with Eudon, "an English prince" (unknown to English historians), as she had vowed herself to Christ and would marry no man. Coming in the course of her flight to the Sambre, and unable to find means of crossing the river, she prayed to God, and immediately two angels appeared and bade her follow them across the surface of the stream, which she did, running over the water "like a bird" without even wetting the soles of her feet. Many other "brides of Christ" were, it appears from the chronicles, enabled to perform this feat so as to preserve their virginity.

It is noticeable, however, that it was not the virtue of chastity itself that was especially stressed in the accounts of such miracles as these, but the virtue of dedicating oneself to a religious life. These "brides of Christ" were regarded, like the Vestal Virgins of Rome, as being

dedicated to a deity. They had determined to place their persons and their fortunes at the disposal of a religious community; their disinclination for matrimony was therefore belauded as a praiseworthy sacrifice of those pleasures—wifehood and motherhood—from which they fled with such determination; and those who were desirous of marrying them were reviled as sacrilegious persons.

In those days faith was regarded as immeasurably superior to good conduct, and the moral to be drawn from most of the stories was the merit of faith and devotion.

For example, there is the well-known story of Beatrice, the naughty nun who ran away from her convent and lived with a clergyman as his mistress. This holy but unsaintly person soon deserted her, and she became a woman of the town. After fifteen years of that life she summoned up her courage and returned to the gate of her nunnery, where she inquired of the porter whether he had ever known a nun of the name of Beatrice. He answered that he knew Beatrice very well, and that she was a most saintly woman who still resided in the convent. Filled with wonder, Beatrice went away, and had a vision of the Virgin Mary, whom she had always devoutly worshipped, and to whose image she had surrendered her keys when she left the convent fifteen years earlier. The Virgin assured her that she might return in safety to the monastery, as she herself had, during the last fifteen years, taken her form and done her duties so that no one had noticed her absence. So Beatrice resumed her nun's garments and returned to the convent, where she lived ever afterwards in the odour of sanctity, though she confessed all that had happened to her and insisted on performing penance for her misdeeds.

This is one of the most celebrated stories in the world, and has been told in prose and poetry in almost every European language. It has been beautifully dramatized,

and quite recently has appeared, in Maeterlinck's version, on the English stage. To a modern audience it comes in the guise of fiction, but to medieval listeners it was told as a fact, and by them it was believed as an example of an actual miraculous occurrence, and perhaps regarded as an example of the possibility of making the best of both worlds!

The Virgin Mary was, according to ecclesiastical historians, constantly engaged in appearing to her devotees and performing miracles in their favour. There are several books devoted entirely to accounts of the miracles which she performed at various times,[1] but the miracles which she herself performed are all put into the shade by the miraculous adventures of her house.

According to the well-known story, some angels who happened to be at Nazareth when the Mohammedans were on the point of capturing that village in the year 1291, lifted bodily up, and flew away with, the house in which the Virgin Mary had lived, and in which there actually was at the time a statue of the Virgin sculptured by the hands of St. Luke himself. The angels first deposited this "holy house" in Dalmatia; but three years later they removed it again, flying with it across the Adriatic and setting it down upon the property of a lady named Laureta. A year later it was again moved, but only a very short distance, and eventually it came to permanent rest upon its present site. A large village or small town which has received the name Loreto sprang up round this precious relic, over which

[1] See Miss Power's very interesting "Medieval English Nunneries," pp. 622–25 and 631, for references to some of these books. It appears that the miracle most frequently performed by "Our Lady" was that of keeping amorous nuns chaste against their wills; but she also occasionally intervened miraculously to conceal the results of an abbess's frailty—for example, when one of these ladies who had gone to bed "great with child" awoke in the morning to find that she had, unknown to herself, been delivered of a child which had been borne away by angels to a hermit, who kept it in his cave until it was seven years old. It will be again noticed that the virtue commended is not chastity, but faith!

a large cathedral was built and beautified by various popes. The statue of the Virgin is now covered with costly jewels, the offerings of pious pilgrims, of whom it is said about half a million visit the shrine every year; and in addition to these jewels the treasury of the cathedral contains a vast collection of valuables. "That this is the identical house in which the Word was made flesh and dwelt among men is attested by papal documents, by the veneration of all the world, by continual miracles, and by the grace of heavenly blessings." So we are officially informed by Catholic authority, and though "papal documents" have somewhat suffered in reputation since the days of the forged "decretals," and "the veneration of all the world" may be considered as an exaggeration, the continuity of miracles is undoubted. The Virgin Mary herself has on more than one occasion, it is said, revisited her ancient home—if a house so far removed from its original surroundings may still be called a home; and the number of miraculous cures performed at Loreto is already incalculable and yearly growing much larger.[1] Moreover, the truth of the story is vouched for by a large number of popes, and by an even larger number of monks and ecclesiastical historians!

And, in addition to this, that the Virgin's house should be rescued from the Moslems is just what we ought to expect, for the Virgin herself frequently came to the assistance of those who had suffered in war with the infidels. A certain John of Damascus, a friend of Pope Gregory II and a fervent defender of image worship during the attacks of the Iconoclasts in the first half of the eighth century, related that one of his hands had been cut off by the Moslems, and that it had been

[1] The house itself is of brick, twenty-eight feet long, twelve and a-half feet wide, and thirteen and a-half feet high. Experts in matters of art have had the temerity to pretend that St. Luke's sculpture closely resembles Italian work of the latter half of the fifteenth century.

miraculously rejoined to his arm by the good offices of the Virgin Mary, to whose image he had prayed. As he was evidently possessed of both hands, his hearers were forced to believe in this miracle. So holy a man, and so ardent a Christian, could not be suspected of inventing a story of the loss of a hand. And miraculous assistance was so frequently sent to those who fought against pagans and infidels that no one could be surprised to hear yet another story of such supernatural help. St. James, Bishop of Edessa, had been helped in the defence of Nisibis against the Persians by an army of gnats which stung the trunks of the elephants and drove them away in confusion. The apostle St. James, usually mounted on a white horse, invariably fought at the head of the Spaniards; St. George assisted the Crusaders; and hosts of angels have assisted, or encouraged, or merely hovered over, many Christian armies, and even some pagan armies, from the time of Constantine to the battle of Mons.[1]

Many saints who fell into the hands of infidels received divine help. Of St. Eutychus it was reported that when, during an early persecution of the Christians, he was cast into a cauldron of boiling water, the latter immediately became lukewarm; that when he was thrown to the lions these usually hungry beasts merely sniffed at him and passed by; and that when finally he was condemned to be roasted before a slow fire he was wafted away from his prison to heaven. His persecutors, so it is said, averred that his disappearance was brought about by the bribes which he distributed among his gaolers, but the faithful do not believe such simple tales: they prefer to believe the incredible.

St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, said to have been

[1] Similar stories relating to Castor and Pollux and to other pagan divinities were current before the Christian era. A catalogue of all such stories, together with an account of the last of these pious frauds, would fill a long chapter.

martyred in 155 A.D., was once cast into flames which refused to burn him. Irenæus is our original authority for this story. Though he also informs us that in his day it was quite a common thing for bishops to raise men from the dead, it would be unbecoming for us to express any doubts about the testimony of a Father of the Church who relates events of which he tells us he had personal knowledge! He wrote only thirty or forty years after the alleged event—not, as the evangelists did, some eighty or hundred.[1]

St. Christine of Tuscany, St. Victor, and St. Maur were other holy men who rivalled the feat of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.[2]

Hunneric, the Vandal, during the Arian persecution of the Athanasians in Africa, sent an expedition to Tipasa (in what is now Morocco). All the Catholics who were caught had their tongues cut out and their right hands cut off. Nevertheless they continued to speak, and indeed spoke so well that one of them became the favourite and most eloquent chaplain to a pious Catholic empress.[3] But to be able to speak though lacking the organ of speech was perhaps considered as only a minor

[1] The roll of the noble army of martyrs contains the names of many men whose exploits were unknown to, or at any rate unrecorded by, their contemporaries. Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and other Christian authors who wrote at great length about the persecutions of the Christians, omitted to make any reference to persecutions which, according to Eusebius, must have taken place in their own days or a few years earlier. Fortunately for the Church, Eusebius, about 150 years later, supplied the omission, described the persecutions, and left on record the names of the martyrs and the manner of their deaths. Eusebius is also a Father of the Church.

[2] According to the Talmud, these were not the only national heroes who walked in the midst of a fiery furnace, into which they had been cast on account of their religion. Abraham, it is said, was denounced by his own father for destroying the paternal idols, and cast by King Nimrod into a furnace so fierce that twelve men were consumed by its flames as they threw the patriach in, and eight more were consumed in a vain endeavour to get him out, though eventually Abraham himself came out quite uninjured, and converted Nimrod to the worship of Jehovah.

[3] See Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," chap. xxxvii, for names of an emperor, a pope, and other persons who testified to these miracles from their own personal knowledge either of the events themselves or of the rumours current about them.

miracle, for much more wonderful things were said to have happened. Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, was said to have "manufactured a head that could speak"; and Albertus Magnus, a Dominican bishop of the thirteenth century, who gave up his holy orders so as to be able to study science, is said to have manufactured a complete brazen man who acted as his servant until he became so troublesome that his master broke him to pieces with a hammer.[1]

Albertus Magnus having left the Church and become a man of science, the numerous miracles attributed to him were believed to have been performed by the assistance of the Devil. No one doubted that they had really been performed, for it was not until many hundreds of years had elapsed that all miracles began to be suspect. Then the disputes between various sects, as well as the irony of men like Voltaire, began to make men suspicious of such wonderful tales.

During the bitter quarrel which raged in France from the second half of the seventeenth till the middle of the eighteenth century between the rival Catholic sects, the Jesuits and the Jansenists, the latter adduced as evidence of Divine favour the occurrence of many miracles. So many people flocked to the cemetery of St. Médard because the halt, the blind, and the deaf were said to be cured at the tomb of a recently deceased Jansenist deacon that the cemetery had to be closed to prevent further disorders.[2]

The Jesuits hotly denied that any of these alleged miracles had really taken place, and also drew the

[1] Perhaps Mrs. Shelley founded her story about Frankenstein's monster upon this older tale. We have lately had produced in London a Czech play, "R. U. R.," founded upon the same theme; but instead of only one brass man the plot assumes the manufacture of Robots on a large scale.

[2] An anonymous wit wrote on the door of the cemetery:—

"De par le roi, defense a Dieu
De faire miracle en ce lieu."
(By order of the King, God is forbidden
To perform miracles here.)

attention of the public to the miracles performed by themselves. For example, they said that a nun, the niece of Pascal, had been cured of a fistula by kissing a Jesuit relic—a thorn from the crown of Jesus! Wonderful thorn which had been miraculously discovered some three or four hundred years after the death of Jesus and then preserved for another 1,300 or 1,400 years![1]

The Jansenists retorted that the Jesuits were tricksters and self-confessed liars, and the listening laymen began to wonder which set of miracles was true. The seed, or as some would say the poison, of scepticism was implanted by these quarrelling priests in a soil where it was to fructify under the care of the Encyclopædists and free-thinking men of science.

It was soon noticed that miracles ceased to take place when men ceased to expect them to take place; that in the days when men thought miracles so common as to be unimportant God was said to have performed many, and that in the days when a single miracle would cause millions of men accustomed to appreciate the orderly processes of nature to marvel and believe, God never performed any. When all men believed, miracles occurred in profusion; when many doubted, not one miracle was vouchsafed to convert them. Yet we are told that miracles were performed for the purpose of making men believe. Has God lost the power of performing miracles, or is God ignorant of the fact that it is to-day that, in the words of Cotter Morison,[2] "the least expenditure of miracle would produce the maximum result" of faith?

Miracles are indeed still occasionally reported, but only from a few backward and priest-ridden corners of

[1] The number of miracles said to have been performed by such holy relics as pieces of the true cross, the nails used at the crucifixion, the clothing and the bones of martyrs, etc., is incalculable. So as not to lengthen further this already long chapter, no other examples will be given of that particular class of miracle.

[2] "The Service of Man."

the globe, where an ignorant peasantry still lives in the mental atmosphere of the Middle Ages.

In 1908 "The Semaine Religieuse," a French Catholic journal, published a report of the inquiry held by the Bishop of Saint-Dié into an event said to have taken place at Remiremont in the Vosges during the previous year. On Sunday, May 26, 1907, during a violent storm, several hailstones were picked up and found, so it was said, to be split in two and to have, on the inner face of each half, an image of the Madonna venerated at Remiremont as Notre Dame du Trésor. "The local Catholics regarded it as a reply to the municipal council's veto of the procession in honour of the Virgin. So many people testified to having seen the miraculous hailstones that the Bishop of St. Dié instituted an inquiry; 107 men, women, and children were heard by the parish priest, and certain well-known men of science were consulted." [1] The result of the Bishop's inquiry was that the absolute authenticity of the occurrence was recognized.

The Protestant smiles when he hears of such events and such inquiries. Let him ask himself whether 107 persons, and certain well-known men of science in addition, testified, within a year of the occurrences, before a court of inquiry, to the miracles in which he believes. Let him ask himself whether the inhabitants of Western Asia nearly two thousand years ago were less credulous than the inhabitants of France fifteen years ago. And if any one be puzzled to account for the volume of evidence forthcoming in support of this Remiremont miracle, let him recall all those war-time stories, so confidently repeated by men who claimed to be eye-witnesses, of the Russian troops passing through England in 1914, and of other imaginary though not miraculous events. The newspaper press, although it can and often does help to spread a false version of facts and still more often an

[1] Dean Inge, "Outspoken Essays," p. 165.

untrue explanation of facts, does in the long run prevent the growths of myths which have no facts at all for their foundation. In the days when news spread only by word of mouth there was no such check to the growth of a legend; and in war time, when the press is muzzled and patriotic newspapers are engaged in propagating rumours that should discourage and deceive the enemy, or encourage—and equally deceive—its own countrymen, we can again observe how myths grow and gain currency. Within a very few weeks of the outbreak of the Great War it was rumoured that a considerable force of Russians had passed through England on their way to France. In a few days' time this rumour was supported by reports from all over the country from people who claimed to have actually seen the Russians. Letters were written minutely describing their uniforms, their appearance, and their horses. Men swore that they had been on the very ships which had conveyed these troops from Archangel. The trains carrying them across the British Isles appeared to have stopped at almost every railway station mentioned in Bradshaw's guide, and they had been seen disembarking or re-embarking at almost every port in the kingdom. To express any doubts as to the possibility of so rapid a mobilization and transport from Russia laid the sceptic open to the anger of those who regarded such doubts as imputations upon their own veracity or upon that of their correspondents. Yet the story was false from beginning to end. It did not even have a small basis of fact. For a long time the newspapers, controlled by the censor, maintained absolute silence about the matter; and then, at last, it was officially denied that any such movement of troops had ever taken place. Yet even then many men still continued to vouch for the story, and to allege that the contradiction was merely a blind.

In France much the same sort of rumours arose and were credited, and the fact of any particular rumour

being true was often accidental and not due to the veracity of its reporter. For example, a man arrived at Rouen, when the attitude of Great Britain was yet unknown to the French, and announced that he had, with his own eyes, seen British troops disembarking at Boulogne; and he clinched his assertions by saying that he knew they were English soldiers because they all wore red coats. It is hardly necessary to add that no British soldier wore a red coat when campaigning in 1914, or for many years previous to that.

There are many persons who are always anxious to appear as being personally and intimately acquainted with celebrities, and as having themselves witnessed notable events. These relate, as if witnessed by themselves, the events they have heard spoken of by others. Others speak of events as having already happened when they have heard it said that they probably will, or possibly may, happen. And so myths arise, and grow, and gain currency, even in this century, when many men have learnt to be sceptical about rumours. How much more easily must legends have arisen and spread when all men were ready to believe any marvel, and hardly to wonder at the greatest of them, since it might be due to the mere whim of a Being as capricious as themselves, though infinitely more powerful!

Rumours will continue to be accepted by most people as facts until most people have learnt to distinguish hearsay evidence from first-hand evidence, and the probable from the improbable, and until men have learnt that things are not necessarily true because their truth would be desirable, and not necessarily untrue because they are unpleasant.

It would be interesting to know who were the "well-known men of science" consulted by the Bishop of Saint Dié, and what possible light they, who were not eye-witnesses, could have thrown on the story if they did not point out its absurdity. The parish priest would not

have to be a very skilful cross-examiner to find support for a story in which his parishioners would be glad to believe, for we know that the ignorant do not distinguish between those things which they know and those things which they only believe, and that many people, at times of excitement, are prepared to claim the credit of being personal witnesses of events which they have heard others say took place. We are not likely to be impressed by the verdict of the Bishop, doubtless a very saintly man, but very possibly incapable of returning a correct verdict in a judicial matter.

For our experience teaches us that it is far more probable that a man should be mistaken, or a deliberate fraud committed, than that frozen drops of rain should in the course of their descent from the clouds have been so curiously impressed with a replica of an image. We know of many occasions upon which people have imagined that they saw things which did not really exist; we know of no occasions on which hailstones have thus split into two and revealed an engraving on their surfaces. Even if we considered it remotely probable that a Divine being, perhaps in a playful mood, should perform so quaint a miracle in honour of the image known as Notre Dame du Trésor, we could hardly accept the evidence brought forward in behalf of this miracle as proof that He actually did so. That many such stories of miraculous events have been deliberately invented by self-seeking or even by well-intentioned but untruthful priests is admitted by all men who have studied the subject, though some of these men admit this fact only with regard to the priests of other religions or other sects than their own. And some "miracles" have undoubtedly been mere conjuring tricks which an unenlightened audience have regarded as supernatural phenomena. The trick, which has lately been the cause of some litigation between a conjurer and a cinema company, of sawing a man into two pieces, was originally performed as a miracle by the priests of an ancient cult;

and a few years ago the Mohammedans of Algiers tried to create a prejudice against their Christian rulers by performing tricks which they said were in reality miracles. The French Government countered this movement by sending the celebrated conjurer and juggler, Robert Houdin, to the scene. There the conjurer confronted the magicians and bested them at their own game. Whenever they performed a miracle he performed a conjuring trick which was even more striking. If they turned a rod into a snake, he turned his wand into two snakes; and, furthermore, at the end of each performance he showed the onlookers exactly how it was done. The credulous became knowing, and in a very short space of time miracles ceased to excite any wonder among the blasé citizens of Algiers. Without a word which might alarm the religious susceptibilities of the followers of the Prophet, the emissary of a rational nation exploded the pretensions of the priests of a superstitious and hostile race.

Stories of miracles have, of course, frequently arisen from the very natural illusions of persons too ready to expect supernatural events. It is said that a few years ago an elderly lady was in the habit of visiting the British Museum for the purpose of consulting an Egyptian mummy about her private affairs. She used to walk round the case in which the mummy lay, and as she walked she propounded a conundrum which the corpse was wont to answer by turning slightly to the right in token of an affirmative, or slightly to the left in token of a negative. When the attendants heard of this remarkable proceeding on the part of the four-thousand-year-old corpse, they investigated the phenomenon and discovered that one of the floor boards upon which the case rested was slightly loose, so that the body was shaken, sometimes to one side and sometimes to the other, whenever the circumambient lady stepped upon that particular plank. Very soon a carpenter had sacrilegiously put an

end to the dead prophet's career as an adviser on terrestrial affairs. It is no longer possible to learn from him the name of the Derby winner, or of the shares which will rise on the stock market. Another miracle ceased because of the unbelief of modern men. London, we fear, can no longer hope to witness miracles.

In Sicily, however, that hope is still entertained. On June 19 of this year (1923), when Etna was in violent eruption, the inhabitants of Linguaglossa, a small town situated north of the volcano, took the pastoral staff of their patron saint—Egidius—and carried it in procession in front of the stream of lava which threatened to overwhelm their houses, for it was believed that on previous occasions this staff had proved most efficacious in staying the torrent.[1] The inhabitants of a neighbouring town, Castiglione, became alarmed lest the action of the Linguaglossans should result in the stream of lava being turned in the direction of Castiglione; so they marched against the men of Linguaglossa, and endeavoured by force to prevent them from performing a miracle beneficial to themselves but possibly harmful to their neighbours. A serious fight ensued between the two bodies of superstitious Sicilians, and they had to be separated, not without casualties, by Carabinieri who hastened to the scene.

But, in spite of such occasional recrudescences of miracles in countries where the standard of education remains low, the present age cannot hope to vie, in this respect, with the ages of faith; and there is only one type of miracle which still commands acceptance among any considerable body of modern men and women. To this type of miracle we must turn our attention before concluding our survey of the miraculous in the Middle Ages; for it is essentially a survival from those days—an anachronism in the twentieth century, like some archaic

[1] Sceptics are unkind enough to attribute this immunity to the fact that the town stands upon somewhat rising ground, so that the lava leaves it aside as it flows down the depression close at hand.

form of life which is a sole survivor of some long-past geological era.

As we have already seen, at Epidaurus and other ancient shrines men were supposed, some two to three thousand years ago, to be miraculously cured of their diseases by the intervention of a god. To similar shrines men and women still flock to-day, hoping, by the intervention of the Virgin Mary or of some saint, to find themselves relieved of their ailments. The most celebrated of such shrines is the grotto at Lourdes, and a short history of that shrine will serve as an example of the rise and pretensions of many other places for which similar curative properties are claimed.

In the middle of last century the "Legitimist" party and the Catholic clergy in France attempted, not altogether unsuccessfully, to make use of miracles in appealing to the ignorant for their support of the old alliance of Royalty and Papacy. Stories of the appearance of the Virgin Mary at various places were widely circulated, and both priests and royalists encouraged the spread of stories so well calculated to arouse the devotion of the superstitious, to bring grist to the ecclesiastical mill, and to strengthen the authority of the allies of the royalists. In 1846 an eccentric Mlle. de la Merlière dressed herself up in a yellow robe and a sugar-loaf hat, and appeared to two shepherd boys, to whom she announced herself as the Virgin Mary. An inquiry revealed the facts of the case; and the Archbishop of Lyons, more honest than most of his colleagues, protested against the acceptance of this fraud as a miracle. But in 1847 the Bishop of Grenoble affirmed that the Virgin Mary had really appeared to the two boys, and a spring on the mountain of La Salette was, and still is, exploited as the scene of the appearance, and as providing a remedy for every disease.

An example so excellent from the point of view of the devout could not fail to have imitators, and in 1858 a little girl declared that she had seen a beautiful woman,

who replied, when asked her name, that she was "The Immaculate Conception."[1] During the course of the year the child saw the Virgin Mary on several occasions, but never again after 1858. She was sent to a convent, and spent the remainder of her life under the care of nuns, while the local clergy with great success proceeded to exploit the miracle. Pilgrims in large numbers still visit the grotto at Lourdes[2] where the Virgin thus re-incarnated herself, and the authorities periodically report miraculous cures of the lame, the blind, and the diseased. Wealth has poured into the coffers of the local ecclesiastical organization, and perhaps after the lapse of due time the little girl, Bernadette Soubirous, will be rewarded by beatification and canonization. For in the eyes of the Vatican it is no absurdity that the Virgin Mary should announce her name as "The Immaculate Conception,"[3] and a precedent was established when Pope Pius IX in 1864 beatified Marie Alacoque, another young woman who had suffered from illusions or from a gift for romance.[4]

The inhabitants of Lourdes, like the inhabitants of Loreto, live upon the credulity of the devout. Not only the priests, but the municipal authorities, the lodging-house and hotel proprietors, the tradesmen, and even the doctors, all desire to boost the efficacy of the shrine. But the continued presence of large numbers of uncured cripples and diseased persons checks the tendency of vested interests to exaggerate the number of cures, and

[1] Many of the pictures of the Virgin Mary, notably the reproductions of Murillo's famous painting, which circulated in France, had the inscription "The Immaculate Conception" printed under them. Hence the child's illusion or invention.

[2] In the neighbourhood of the Pyrenees and not very far from Pau.

[3] At the consecration of the magnificent church which was built above the grotto no less than thirty-five cardinals were present, in addition to a large number of such comparatively small fry as archbishops and bishops.

[4] In 1675 Marie Alacoque claimed that she had seen the bleeding heart of Jesus, and that she and He had exchanged hearts. Her Jesuit confessor exploited this delusion, and very soon the worship of the sacred heart of Jesus became exceedingly popular in many Catholic countries. Pius IX instituted a festival of the "Sacred Heart," and one of the most magnificent churches in Paris is dedicated to the heart of Jesus.

it is, in fact, acknowledged that the percentage of cures to patients does not exceed three—a number which does not compare favourably with the results obtained in institutions established for the practice of hypnotism and auto-suggestion. Doubtless such institutions would not accept for treatment patients who are evidently incurable, and many such unfortunate persons go as a last hope to take the waters of Lourdes. If such cases were eliminated from our reckoning, the percentage of cures achieved at Lourdes would probably not fall far short of those achieved in secular establishments, where the real cause of such cures is admitted. In ancient times always, and in modern times occasionally, faith-healers have claimed miraculous powers. But honest modern practitioners of the art confess, what has only been learnt in modern days, that their methods involve nothing miraculous.

M. Coué, one of the most eminent of such "faith-healers," states:—

> I am no healer, no miracle-maker, for the simple reason that there are no miracles or healers. My rôle is quite otherwise. It consists of teaching people to employ well and consciously an instrument which we carry from birth, and use unconsciously day and night, and therefore more often ill than well. That instrument is Auto-suggestion, which makes one ill when one is not, or worse when one is ill. If it can produce so much ill unconsciously, it can, when used consciously, not only repair the ill it has caused, but determine the cure of affections and lesions against which ordinary processes have failed.[1]

With the exact measure of success gained by these methods we are not now concerned, but it is of importance to note that whatever benefits are derived by any invalids from following the treatment are admittedly produced by themselves and not by any external power. "You see," says M. Coué, "it is not from me but from yourself that you must seek your cure, for the cure depends on you alone." The prac-

[1] Letter from M. Coué to "The Times."

titioner advises and urges the patient to repeat certain phrases, and thus to impress upon his own mind an optimistic determination to become gradually improved in health. If the patient has faith in the method, his body may benefit from his own belief that it will benefit. And the honest professor plainly tells his patients that the faith must not be in him (the professor), but in the method and himself (the patient). The miracle at Lourdes is in London a cure by auto-suggestion. The magic formula of a few hundred years ago has become merely and avowedly a parrot's phrase, repeated for the purpose of impression upon the sub-conscious mind. The hypnotic influence of Lourdes and the faith of the patient occasionally effect the same kind of cure as is brought about by the methods of the professors of auto-suggestion, just as the prayers of "Christian Science" healers may occasionally benefit neurotic individuals who have faith in them. That such influences as these have ever had any effect upon serious organic diseases or fractures there is no evidence whatever save the assertions of persons financially interested in religious and secular quackery, and persons who are not qualified to diagnose the ills said to be cured. But so long as there exist persons incapable of distinguishing first-hand expert evidence from the hearsay evidence of the ignorant we shall doubtless occasionally hear tales of miraculously restored limbs and miraculously removed tumours. For such tales are far more exciting to most people than the true tales of the march of medical science. It requires some mental effort for the layman to comprehend even vaguely the marvels of medicine and surgery; it requires no mental effort at all to gossip about miracles and fairy tales.

We have in this chapter briefly considered a few typical examples of the thousands of miracles said to have occurred in the Middle Ages; and it is now necessary to study the arguments of those who realize that these stories are mere fables, and who attempt to find some

logical distinction between them and the Biblical miracles. For, as we noticed at the beginning of the chapter, it is that problem which has confronted theologians ever since the time when the collapse of Papal authority left men free to question the ecclesiastical frauds and fables that had been accepted in the Age of Faith as genuine historical miracles.

NOTE

The Latest Medieval Revival in England

Old Etonians are, of course, delighted to learn that Henry VI, the founder of their school, is at present a candidate for beatification; but most of them will be surprised to hear that that monarch is credited, according to an old MS. in the British Museum, with the performance of no less than 368 miracles. Seventy-seven of these were carefully investigated, and twenty-three selected as absolutely proved. The methods by which such an investigation is carried out must be extremely curious, but it would be unbecoming for us to express any doubts upon matters which have been referred to the Vatican for final decision. We can only express our regrets that such miraculous powers no longer reside in our royal family; for doubtless in the twentieth century they would be used for much more important purposes than they seem to have been by the fifteenth-century monarch, so rudely referred to by historians as an imbecile. That such a man founded Eton College was perhaps a miracle. It is unnecessary to revive the memory of the other 367 wonders. Cardinal Gasquet has just issued a book, "The Religious Life of King Henry VI," in which 135 of the monarch's posthumous miracles are, it is said, referred to.

Chapter IV

MODERN APOLOGISTS

The real question which an inquirer into the truth of the Gospel story has to ask himself is whether the events therein recorded actually took place; but for this question another is sometimes substituted and treated at great length. Instead of confining their attention to the concrete question of whether the Gospel miracles really occurred, apologists are apt to turn aside to the abstract question of whether miracles are possible. But the principal argument against the Biblical miracles is not that they are impossible events, for that is not an argument but an assumption,[1] but that the evidence adduced for their occurrence is such that it would not be accepted for the occurrence of any ordinary event, let alone for the occurrence of events so extraordinary as to require the best, that is to say first-hand and unimpeachable, evidence before they can be credited.[2] In support of that argument it is pointed out that men of olden time were ready to believe in the most absurd stories, that even in later days thousands of miracles were reported

[1] An assumption that may be warranted; but in debate we are not entitled to assume anything that cannot be *conclusively* proved, and the orthodox contention is that they took place in spite of their natural impossibility.

[2] Hume's celebrated argument about miracles was summed up by Huxley in the following words: ".....when repeated and minute examination never reveals a break in the chain of causes and effects, and the whole edifice of practical life is built upon our faith in its continuity, the belief that that chain has never been broken becomes one of the strongest and most justifiable of human convictions. And it must be admitted to be a reasonable request if we ask those who would have us put faith in the actual occurrence of interruptions of that order to produce evidence in favour of their view, not only equal, but superior in weight, to that which leads us to adopt ours" ("Essays," vol. vi, chap. vii).

by well-known men, and that since men began systematically to observe phenomena and accurately to record their observations no exceptions to the normal course of nature have been reported, though such exceptions were so frequently reported before men learnt that phenomena obeyed uniform laws, and were not, as had been previously thought, invariably controlled by an arbitrary Being (or Beings) of capricious moods.

The apologists, to whom this argument should be well known, for it is now very old, usually seek to evade it by raising questions which do not in any way affect its validity. One such question, which is repeatedly asked by the defenders of miracles, is the following. If there is an omnipotent God, is it not possible, or indeed probable, that He should have performed miracles for the purpose of revealing Himself? The obvious, though not the expected, answer is that we are not at present concerned with the hypothetical question of what would be possible to an omnipotent God, but with the question of whether certain alleged events did in fact take place. It may, however, be observed, if we are to take hypotheses into consideration, that an omnipotent God who wished to reveal Himself might be expected to use methods a little more convincing than those which converted only a small number of people in one part of the globe to a belief in His revelation. The same argument applies to the assertion that as Jesus was God he was quite capable of interfering with the natural course of events. Moreover, it is upon these alleged interferences that the apologists rely to prove that Jesus was God, and so the statement assumes as proved the very point which the apologist sets out to prove. And in addition to all this the alleged possibility of an event is taken as the equivalent of its actual occurrence.

From these hypothetical questions about the theoretical possibility of miracles let us turn to the arguments directed to a definite and important point. The ablest

modern apologists have recognized the difficulty and the importance of distinguishing between the Gospel miracles and the "constant stream of miraculous pretension"[1] current in ancient and medieval times.

As regards the pagan miracles, the arguments of these apologists always resolve themselves into an appeal for faith in the Gospel tradition, coupled with scepticism as regards the pagan miracles. Some have even ventured to remark, as if the fact favoured a belief in the Gospel miracles, that no contemporary author refuted these stories. But this silence on the part of contemporary authors is more probably a sign that they never heard of these miracles, for as the authors referred to were not Christians it cannot be a sign that they both heard of them and believed in them. That no contemporary author refuted or expressed any doubts about such stories as that of St. George and the Dragon, or of King Alfred and the cakes, does not mean that the contemporary writers endorsed such stories, but only that they had either never heard of them or did not consider them worth discussion.

Cardinal Newman and some others argue that God enables men to distinguish between the true and false doctrines which miracles are supposed to attest, and that therefore if the doctrine appeals to a man's innate conscience as good he can accept the miracles which support it, whereas if the doctrine is bad he must reject the witness of the miracle.[2] In other words, if the

[1] Dr. Gore ("Belief in God," pp. 204-6) attempts to explain the silence of Josephus and of the Roman historians regarding the miraculous events said to have taken place during the lifetime and at the death of Jesus by emphasizing the commonness of reports about miracles. Miracles of all kinds and in all parts of the Roman Empire were, he states, so frequently reported that secular historians took no notice of them. It can hardly have escaped the Bishop's notice that his contention explains rather more than his theory requires!

[2] See Cardinal Newman's essays on Scriptural Miracles and Archbishop Trench's "Miracles of Our Lord." These apologists appear to believe that false prophets, demons, and other impostors could perform miracles, as indeed is implied by Matthew xxiv, 24. See also Matthew vii, 22-23;

doctrine appeals to us we should believe that the miracles occurred, and then the miracles become evidence for the doctrine—another example of a circular argument. The question resolves itself into a matter of our personal judgment of the merits of the doctrines, and not into a matter of evidence. Archbishop Trench put the argument somewhat differently. According to him, miracles attest supernatural power, and it is for us to determine whether that power comes from God or from the Devil. We pick and choose from the doctrines not for the purpose of determining whether the miracles took place, for we accept them all, but for the purpose of determining who performed them! So the acceptance or the rejection of the testimony of miracles becomes, if we follow the example of these divines, not a matter of inquiry into the evidence for their occurrence, but a matter of choice. If we like the doctrines connected with the miracle, we say that the story is true, and that the miracle was performed by God; if we do not like the doctrine, we say that the story is false, or that the miracle was performed by the Devil. Surely a very arbitrary method of forming an historical judgment![1]

As regards the medieval miracles, Cardinal Newman and the Catholics accept them as historical events. He maintains that the evidence for the Gospel miracles is weaker than that for the medieval miracles—the healing by the touch of relics and so on—since for these latter there is much contemporary and first-hand evidence, and for the former only the second- or third-hand evidence

xii, 27; Mark xiii, 22; ix, 38; etc. The appeal to innate conscience is really an appeal to prejudices acquired by an education and an environment which predispose persons to accept certain doctrines without examination.

[1] With many people the choice of a religion is dictated by æsthetic considerations rather than by historical judgment. What they call a belief is really an emotional preference or an hereditary prejudice. Coventry Patmore wrote, in his copy of Matthew Arnold's "Literature and Dogma": "What's the use of argufying? When all's said, I take to the Catholic religion rather than to Atheism or Protestantism as I take to ale rather than to porter or half-and-half, because I like it better."

of men who wrote at Rome or in Greece many years after the occurrence of the events they had themselves never witnessed. So, as he believed in all the miracles described in the Bible, he also believed in most of the "ecclesiastical miracles." For if one believed that Noah collected specimens of every animal, bird, and insect in the world, and kept them alive for several weeks in a boat, surely it was no more difficult to believe that "the Holy House of Loreto" was transported a few hundreds of miles in a few hours by some angels; and if one accepted the evidence for the raising to life again of the dead man who was lowered into the grave of Elisha,[1] and the evidence for the curing of many diseased persons who merely touched some handkerchiefs that belonged to St. Paul,[2] how could one reject the evidence for the liquefaction of the blood of St. Pantaloon,[3] or for the miraculous oil that flowed from the body of the virgin Saint Walburga?[4]

Dr. Fisher, who sets forth at great length all the arguments by which Protestant theologians have attempted to distinguish between Gospel and other miracles,[5]

[1] 2 Kings xiii, 20–21. [2] Acts xix, 11–12.

[3] At Ravello the blood of St. Pantaloon is said to liquefy every June on the anniversary of the saint's feast day, and also whenever a piece of the "True Cross" is brought into the church where this alleged relic is kept. In another church the blood of St. Pantaloon is said to remain permanently liquid. At Naples St. John the Baptist's blood is still said by the priests to liquefy on every 29th of August, and in many other places the blood of various saints is said to turn from its dried-up state to a liquid state on their particular feast days.

[4] The Cardinal adduced testimony to this miraculous oil in the years 893 and 1306, after 1450, in 1615 and 1620, and concludes "the oil still flows." St. Walburga is said to have died in the eighth century, and the oil that is said to flow from her body is also said to have curative properties. See Newman's "Apologia Pro Vita Sua," Appendix (4).

[5] "The Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief," by G. P. Fisher, D.D. (1899), chap. x. Dr. Fisher acknowledges that "the question whether the miracles described in the New Testament, by which it is alleged that Christianity was ushered into the world, actually occurred, is to be settled by an examination of the evidence. It is an historical question, and is to be determined by an application of the canons applicable to historical inquiry." But, having acknowledged this, he omits to put it into practice. He assumes that the Gospel miracles occurred exactly as stated, and then asserts that they were performed

evidently recognized that these arguments are really unsound, for at the end of his own argument he states his belief that "miraculous manifestations in the Church ceased gradually. No sharp line of demarcation can be drawn, marking off the age of miracles from the subsequent period, when the operations of the Divine Providence and Spirit no longer were palpably distinguished from the movements of natural law."[1]

But of these two apologists, the typical Catholic and the typical Protestant, the Catholic appears to be the more logical. For, as he maintains, if we find it possible to believe in the Scriptural miracles our only reason for rejecting the ecclesiastical miracles can be that they are less well attested than the others, and this is not the case. He says, referring to medicinal qualities of St. Walburga's oil, that "there is nothing extravagant in this report of the relics having a supernatural virtue; and for this reason, because there are such instances in Scripture, and Scripture cannot be extravagant." If the statement that

with a higher object in view than there was for the performance of the medieval miracles, and that they were performed "in opposition to prevalent beliefs," and not, like the ecclesiastical miracles, in support of a prevailing system. He is careful not to specify any particular Gospel miracles; and, in any case, the purpose of those who related the stories of all these miracles was the same—viz., to convince people of the truth of the Christian doctrines; and they were all related to people who were already Christians or who desired to hear the Christian story told. There was no higher object in view in one case than in the other, and no opposition to prevalent beliefs in either case, as the prevalent belief was in the miraculous at all times.

[1] We can draw the line of demarcation for Dr. Fisher. We place it between the ages when men believed that phenomena were directly controlled by those operations of Divine Providence to which he refers, and the age when men first formed a conception of the natural law to which he also refers. Dr. Fisher perhaps recollects the curious argument used by some of his predecessors to the effect that Jesus was the source of some great but limited supernatural power which He divided between the Apostles, who, in their turn, sub-divided their shares between their successors, and so on until the power became so much weakened by subdivision that it ceased to suffice for the performance of miracles. A most ingenious theory, but one for which there is no evidence whatever, whereas there is much evidence for the theory that miracles ceased when men were no longer prepared to credit every marvellous tale they heard, and when men began to demand some good evidence before they believed an apparent impossibility.

"Scripture cannot be extravagant" means that Scripture must always be correct, it is an assumption that cannot be accepted. Many parts of "Scripture" have conclusively been shown to be incorrect and mere folk-lore, and many other passages contradict each other; so the fact that miracles are reported in "Scripture" is not absolutely reliable evidence that a miracle has ever taken place. We know that "Scripture" was written by men who lived in an age when every extravagance was credited, and when miracles of every kind—some childish, some cruel, some useless, and many identical with the "Scripture" miracles—were attributed to a host of pagan gods, demi-gods, heroes, and kings. That is to say, that there is no reason for crediting, though there may be an inclination born of prejudice to credit, Scripture miracles, any more than the miracles recorded in Greek mythology or in Egyptian legends. The Cardinal's acute reasoning powers were vitiated because he refused to apply his reason to a certain set of alleged facts. He accepted the Canonical books without question, and, starting with faulty premises, applied his intellect to deducing the logical consequences. Having assumed that the Biblical miracles really occurred, he was prepared to believe in other miracles upon evidence which might suffice to satisfy people as to the occurrence of normal and unimportant events. For in regard to matters which are very common and about which we take no great interest we do not require the best of evidence. If it is reported that rain has fallen in the centre of the desert of Sahara, we are quite prepared to believe the fact. It is an uncommon but not an impossible or even a previously unknown event. But if a traveller reports that men have skated across Lake Chad we inquire into the antecedents of this traveller. Is he a trustworthy observer? Is he known to be credulous and fond of repeating "tall stories"? Does he state that he saw this strange happening himself, or only that it was reported to him by one who had seen

it, or by one who had only heard talk of it? And, finally, we say to ourselves, "Is it more likely that this traveller should be deceived or be a liar than that an event so incompatible with all the other accounts we have heard of the climate of Lake Chad should have actually occurred?" And if the reported phenomenon was of very great importance to us, we would be even more particular about the validity of the evidence for its occurrence. If it was not merely a unique but an apparently impossible occurrence, and if it also was, according to those who reported it, of the utmost importance to ourselves and to every other inhabitant, present and future, of this earth, would we not inquire very thoroughly into the evidence adduced for its occurrence? In short, though we are prepared to accept as true, without much inquiry, the reports of normal occurrences of no importance, we are not prepared to accept as true, without some really first-class evidence, reports of some extremely abnormal occurrence which is said to be of the utmost importance to us. The Cardinal was prepared to accept as true, without any such careful inquiry, the miracles accepted by the Church. In fact, he heaped scorn on those who made such inquiries—"as if moral and religious questions required legal proof, and evidence was the test of truth," and he regarded with horror a scientific age when men were beginning to require proofs about supernatural events instead of accepting them as he himself did because the doctrine to which they were said to be attached seemed pleasant.

But the Cardinal's mental attitude was far more consistent than the mental attitude of the Protestants, who apply the ordinary canons of criticism to ecclesiastical miracles but refuse to apply them to the Biblical miracles. The Christian faith was kept alive throughout many centuries by constant reports of miracles, and the generations which were thus impelled to hand down the faith regarded those ecclesiastical miracles as being just as true

as the Gospel ones. Logically, we have more reason for accepting their testimony regarding the ecclesiastical miracle than we have for accepting their tradition about the Gospel miracle. As Matthew Arnold pointed out:—

> The Protestant notion is doomed to an earlier ruin than the Catholic; for the Protestant notion invites to a criticism by which it must before long itself perish. When Stephen was martyred, he looked up into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. That, says the Protestant, is solid fact. At the martyrdom of St. Fructuosus the Christian servants of the Roman governor, Babylas and Mygdone, saw the heavens open, and the saint and his deacon, Eulogius, carried up on high with crowns on their heads. That is, says the Protestant, imposture or else illusion. St. Paul hears, on his way to Damascus, the voice of Jesus say to him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" That is solid fact. The companion of St. Thomas Aquinas hears a voice from the crucifix say to the praying saint: "Thou hast written well of me, Thomas; what recompense dost thou desire?" That is imposture or else illusion. Why? It is impossible to find any criterion by which one of these incidents may establish its claim to a solidity which we refuse to the others.
>
> One of two things must be made out in order to place either the Bible-miracles alone, or the Bible-miracles and the miracles of the Catholic Church with them, in a class by themselves. Either they must be shown to have arisen in a time eminently unfavourable to such a process as Shakespeare describes,[1] to amplification and the production of legend; or they must be shown to be recorded in documents of an eminently historical mode of birth, and publication. But surely it is manifest that the Bible-miracles fulfil neither of these conditions.[2]

[1] Arnold refers to the words he has previously quoted:—

> No natural exhalation in the sky,
> No scape of nature, no distemper'd day,
> No common wind, no customed event,
> But they will pluck away his natural cause,
> And call them meteors, prodigies, and signs,
> Abortives, presages, and tongues of heaven.

[2] "Literature and Dogma," chapter v, section 3. Matthew Arnold goes on to compare the belief in the Israelites' miraculous passage of the Red Sea, and the natural explanation given by us to the kindred story of Alexander the Great's passage of the Pamphylian Sea.

Both the Catholic and the Protestant accept the Biblical miracles[1] without applying to them the same tests that they would apply to pagan miracles. The Catholic maintains that the ecclesiastical miracles should be judged by the same standard as the Biblical; the Protestant maintains that after the last book was admitted to the Canon the ordinary rules of historical criticism may be applied to stories of the miraculous. The miracles accepted by these sects are those, and only those, that have not been subjected to a rational examination. Hume maintained that no testimony sufficed to establish a fact contrary to universal experience unless that testimony was such that "its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish." It is far more probable that witnesses should be mistaken or untruthful than that the laws of nature should be violated. We have much experience of illusion and of untruthfulness, but no experience of violation of natural law. And who are our witnesses? Not, as the ignorant believe, and are taught by some apologists who wish to excite fervour in favour of the Gospel authors, the persons named Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John;[2] but some unknown persons writing many years after the events they relate were supposed to have taken place. To refer, as some apologists do, with horror to the accusation that these authors wrote what was false is really absurd. For no one knows who they were nor exactly when they wrote, so no one accuses them of deliberate imposture. As we have already noticed, most of the authors of those days repeated without verification all the wonderful tales they heard of their heroes, and embellished them without any thought of deceiving. Few of them distinguished between gossip and fiction and history and fact; and a great deal of

[1] At any rate in theory.

[2] And even if these men had been our witnesses, we would have only their own evidence to their own virtues and to the reliability which used to be claimed for them on account of those virtues.

ancient history was what we would now call historical romance.[1] They wrote for a public which wanted, far more than even the present public, striking events rather than dry facts. Even now the number of persons who are anxious to study historic and scientific facts is far smaller than the number who enjoy reading highly-coloured, exaggerated, and distorted accounts of real events, or melodramatic stories of fictitious events. To most people the story of the sun "standing still in the heavens" while the carnage of a battle continues is more interesting than the story of the earth's yearly revolution round the sun continuing for untold millions of years. Tales about the unicorn, the phœnix, the roc, and the sea-serpent find a thousand readers for one who studies a serious treatise on natural history. We need not blame the uncultured men and women who thus seek in the wonderful, the fictitious, and the exciting for relief from the humdrum monotony of their daily toil, even if we ourselves have learnt that astronomy has more wonders and biology more curiosities than any fairy tales, and that history is more dramatic than any fiction; but at least we can refrain from encouraging them to believe that fiction is fact and that the abnormal is normal. The medieval Church, by insisting upon the miraculous, turned the minds of men from the contemplation of nature to thoughts of the supernatural—from what was known to what could not be known even if it existed. So many miracles were reported that men's critical faculties became atrophied. They ceased to marvel at wonders which they were taught to regard as the normal acts of a Divine being. They never thought of questioning

[1] The Bishop of Gloucester, referring to contemporary Jewish literature, admits that it shows "an entire absence of any historical sense," and that "a desire for what seems edification entirely overpowers any conception of historical truth" ("The Life and Teaching of Jesus," by Arthur C. Headlam). Yet he accepts the Gospel story as historical! Why? Because he is determined to do so, and therefore he steadfastly refuses to submit the Gospels to the same critical tests that he applies to other books.

them, but accepted stories of the miraculous without any more inquiry than they would devote to a statement that the weather in the next parish had been fine or bad.

But a new age has now arisen—an age in which men are daily wresting new secrets from Nature, an age in which men are beginning to realize the importance of recognizing and facing facts, and an age in which accurate and exact knowledge ranks higher than romantic and picturesque speculation. Is any good purpose served in such an age by pretending that we believe things that no man who has honestly and without prejudice studied the facts does really believe? However venerable an institution may be, it cannot alter facts, and it has no right to teach what is not true merely because it believes that its own interests, or even that its own survival, are bound up with an ancient but erroneous belief. It is not intended to imply, by this, that apologists are deliberately dishonest men. There are doubtless but very few men who consciously seek to obscure the truth. But there are very many men who are temperamentally disinclined to face facts which may disturb their mental outlook. Their opinions once formed at an early age, they so abhor the idea of confessing that they are wrong that, instead of inquiring into the validity of those doctrines and theories which they originally accepted upon the authority of their elders and not upon any rational grounds, they seek only to find excuses and props for them, and accept as explanations arguments which, upon any other matters, they would scorn as irrational quibbles. One has no desire to quarrel with such men, or to criticize those still more unfortunate individuals for whom a confession of their real opinions would mean starvation; but there are other persons who do desire to study these matters, and who are therefore entitled to have the facts and the arguments put simply before them for their consideration and verdict. The

orthodox are entitled, if they can, to refute those facts and arguments; but they no longer have a legal right, and they never had any moral right, to forbid their publication. That they do deprecate such publication shows the weakness of their case.

Appendix I

ST. GEORGE OF ENGLAND

The stories[1] which connect St. George with the Emperor Diocletian contain an apparent anachronism, as the saint would have been but a youth when Diocletian died; but the hagiologists appear to have tried to substitute an entirely mythical St. George for the original George of Cappadocia. And this is not surprising, as the original George, the primate of Alexandria, so strangely adopted during the Crusades as our national patron, was one of the worst scoundrels of his own or of any other time. A fourth-century war profiteer (chiefly in bacon), an unjust tax collector, a monopolizer, a parasite, a man convicted of fraud, he eventually took clerical orders, not with a view to atone by a virtuous old age for the misdeeds of his youth, but with the object of more easily extracting money from others. Having bought his preferment to the lucrative post of primate of Alexandria, he eventually "backed the wrong horse," became a champion of Arianism, and was murdered by an infuriated mob composed of those who had suffered from his exactions, and of those who had taken the side of the Athanasian sect in its mortal, and subsequently victorious, quarrel with the Arians.

It is, indeed, said by some that the identification of this George of Cappadocia with the patron saint of England is wrong; but the evidence for the existence of an earlier George of Cappadocia is very weak, though some of the legends which gathered round the name of St. George were probably pre-Christian.[2]

The story of the dragon is briefly as follows. The terrible monster had taken up his abode near the town of Silene in Libya, and demanded, as daily tribute from its citizens, two

[1] See pages 76–7.

[2] As to this see Baring Gould's "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages," and compare Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," chapter xxiii, and the names of his authorities.

sheep for its repast. When all the sheep had been killed, the inhabitants of Silene were forced to supply a human being every day in place of the animals. At last the lot fell on the king's daughter, and the king dared not refuse to sacrifice her. As she went forth to the lake where the dragon dwelt, she met the knight-errant, George, who refused to leave her to her fate, made the sign of the cross, ran the dragon through with his spear with such force that he pinned him to the ground, and eventually led the cowed monster by the lady's girdle[1] back into the town, where he, after baptizing its 20,000 inhabitants, decapitated the animal.

Scenes from this story are to be seen sculptured in many cathedrals, notably at Rouen, where it is represented on the beautiful memorial to the two Georges, uncle and nephew, the Cardinals d'Amboise.

Until the time of Pope Clement VII (1523–7) a hymn in honour of St. George and about his conquest of the dragon used to be sung in cathedrals and churches on St. George's Day. The revival of learning had implanted the seeds of scepticism, the reformers had drawn attention to some of the grosser absurdities of the popular beliefs, and Clement proceeded to purge the Catholic liturgy of references to such fairy tales as this one. But it was not until long after the pontificate of Clement VII, and long after the Protestant Churches had broken away from Rome, that most people realized that the tale was a myth.

St. George was not the only person of whom a similar tale was told. Maury, quoting authorities in each case, gives a list[2] of over forty of the most celebrated saints who were said to have slain dragons, and also mentions the names of several of the secular heroes of whom the same feat is related.

He draws attention to the fact that the scene of St. George's exploit is very close to the locality where Perseus was said to have rescued Andromeda from the sea-monster, and that Joppa, whence Jonah is said to have sailed on his ill-fated voyage, is also near by.[3] Doubtless such myths, once started, tend to

[1] Saint Martha led her dragon, the Tarasque, who had ravaged Tarascon, by her garter. Ecclesiastical conquerors of dragons appear usually to have employed their stoles for this purpose.

[2] "Légendes Pieuses," p. 144, *et seq.*

[3] Josephus tells us that he himself saw the chain which was reputed to

re-appear in successive ages with the names of new protagonists and with slight racial or religious alterations to bring them up to date, to awaken flagging interest, and to point a moral.[1]

Later legends may have often originated in metaphorical accounts of saintly struggles with the powers of evil. In their lust for the picturesque and striking, and in their disdain for historical veracity, medieval authors spoke of their heroes' war on wickedness, and of their reform of whole districts, in terms of the ancient mythologies. It is that fact which seems to justify this digression, for here we trace the rise of well-known legends, and see how other less obviously mythical stories could arise not from one source alone but from two—the ancient nature-myth and the poetical metaphor combined.

have bound Andromeda to the rock; and St. Jerome states that in his own time the skeleton of the sea-monster whom Perseus killed was still to be seen. Doubtless such skeletons were those of pre-historic saurians such as we now see exhibited in our Natural History Museums, and very probably the oldest myths and legends about dragons had their origin in the discovery, long before the science of palæontology had been dreamt of, of such remains, or gathered round the heads of crocodiles and hippopotami preserved in countries where such animals were unknown.

[1] The fame of a national hero was seldom regarded as complete without some story being told of his successful encounters with monsters. Even in comparatively speaking modern days such fables were invented. Alfred the Great, for example, was said to have been a great killer of giants, and to have slain one such monster who was in the habit of eating about thirty men every day, and of wearing clothes made from the beards of his victims. The ecclesiastical chroniclers—the Archdeacons of Monmouth and of Oxford—who recorded this *fact*, and others even more wonderful in their history of Britain, received much praise from their contemporaries and immediate successors for having written the only really reliable history of their country!

Appendix II

"LIFE'S TRUE VALUES"

Some of the weekly essays in "The Times," written, so a preliminary announcement states, "from the Christian standpoint, on moral and religious thought and practice," have been republished under the title, "Life's True Values." They should, at some future date, form a valuable record of one stage in the theological journey from a professed Faith to an avowed Scepticism, for the old dogmatic terms are still used, though bereft of their old meanings, and the "value" of the ancient doctrines is stoutly defended in the very same paragraphs as those in which the doctrines themselves are implicitly abandoned.

For example, in an article on "Eternal Life: Present and Future" ("The Times," March 31, 1923) we read as follows:—

> It has been objected that the risen Lord did not appear to any but His followers. This objection is based on a mistaken notion of the Resurrection. It was an act of the spiritual order to be discerned only by the spiritual faculties of men. The Risen Christ could be seen only by those whose spiritual apprehension was purified by faith. We must not confound resuscitation with resurrection. The Gospel tells us that others were raised from death to resume on earth the life which had formerly been theirs. The Resurrection of Christ was not after this fashion. He did not return to the conditions of His former existence. He was no longer bound by the laws of matter. His Resurrection life surpassed this world's range, and only those whose faith transcended things temporal could know that He was risen. No evidence of the fact could in the nature of the case be offered to those who lacked discernment of the Spirit.

So the writer evidently believes, like the Catholic Abbé Loisy, that "the Resurrection" was a spiritual and not an historical material fact; but in this and in another article called "The Resurrection: its Moral Results" (April 7, 1923) he lays great

stress upon the ethical importance of the Resurrection as an event which assures men of their own immortality and forms the only true basis of moral virtue. In an article entitled "The Ascension: Perfection Attained" (May 12, 1923) we again find the same extraordinary insistence upon the moral value of a doctrine founded upon an event which, it is admitted, never took place. The Ascension doctrine must, it is inferred, be retained because it is "a pledge of manhood's perfection," though the event can no longer be regarded as having taken place as men used to think it took place.

And all these explanations and arguments, though disguised under a drapery of pious irrelevancies—a sanctimony which is rather more repellent that a straightforward refusal to face facts —seem designed merely to "save the faces" of those who disbelieve but dare not own their disbelief. This is all the more remarkable because in one of these articles, "Resurrection: Fact and Mode" (January 21, 1922), which deals with the resurrection of the body, it is confessed that there are no grounds

> for insisting that faithfulness to Christianity necessitates our retention of those traditional forms in which the doctrine has been expressed. It is not sufficient argument to say that it has been held by the Church from the first ages to the present time, and therefore it must continue. We live in a new world. Modern science, criticism, philosophy, all that fashions present life in thought, have changed, and we cannot retain the forms of centuries long past without loss to the truth they were created to preserve and guard.

What a pity so eloquent and so evidently well-meaning a writer has not consistently and always kept that argument in view!

What right has he, after making that admission, to refer contemptuously to others who maintain—only more consistently—that "we cannot retain the forms of centuries long past"? It is merely obscurantism masquerading under a cloak of piety to state that scepticism is due to the dullness of men's spiritual perceptions: as if credulity or pretence were the hall-marks of a spiritual person, and as if to believe in a myth or to affirm a belief which one does not really hold was something to be proud of—a sign of superiority to those vulgar people who

refuse either to ignore facts or to dissimulate about them. All these appeals to "religious experience," and all these demands that the facts of faith should be " tested in the crucible of life," are mere evasions of the real question, which is whether certain events ever really occurred, or deliberate attempts to remove that question from the realm of reason to the realm of emotion. Sanctimoniousness in this new guise is no more attractive than it was in its older and more crude manifestations, and it is difficult to extend one's sympathy from those who are driven to prevaricate, by a misplaced sense of professional loyalty, or even by dire economic necessities, to those who deliberately stimulate the habit of self-deception by teaching various methods of equivocation. For what the enlightened clergy now require is, not encouragement in searching for new quibbles to enable them to retain some measure of self-respect when they affirm what they do not believe, but an assurance that they may speak the truth without thereby forfeiting their positions. And what the unenlightened clergy require is enlightenment from the ecclesiastical authorities, who at present fear the most ignorant of their subalterns more than the most learned of their captains. The most ignorant being always the most bigoted, and often the most influential among the devout and also ignorant laity, the Bishops fear to offend them. These almost illiterate parsons assail those of their colleagues who confess the validity of modern research and the irrefutable conclusions to which that research leads. (For examples of this ignorant intolerance the clerical attacks upon Bishop Colenso and upon Charles Darwin should be studied. Colenso's demonstration of the unhistorical character of part of the Old Testament is accepted to-day by every commentator as essentially sound, and no man of any scientific attainments to-day doubts the theory of evolution which Darwin did so much to explain and popularize. But in their own times both these men, and the clergymen who were sufficiently well educated and bold enough to understand and acknowledge the truth of their contentions, were subjected to attacks of the most violent character from the pulpit and in the clerical press.) Incapable of inquiring, or unwilling to inquire, into the reasons for believing or disbelieving old doctrines, they pursue with taunts and bitter abuse those clergymen who have the capacity for

studying, and the honesty to acknowledge the result of their studies, of these ancient tales. Such men should have their attention drawn to the words of a very distinguished member of their own profession, the late Dean Farrar, who wrote as follows[1]:—

> There are a certain number of persons who, when their minds have become stereotyped in foregone conclusions, are simply *incapable* of grasping new truths. They become obstructionists. As convinced as the Pope of their own personal infallibility, their attitude towards those who see that the old views are no longer tenable is an attitude of anger and alarm. This is the usual temper of the *odium theologicum*. It would, if it could, grasp the thumbscrew and the rack of the medieval Inquisitors, and would, in the last resource, hand over all opponents to the scaffold or the stake. Those whose intellects have been petrified by custom and advancing years are, of all others, the most hopeless to deal with. They have made themselves incapable of fair and rational examination of the truths which they impugn. They think they can, by mere assertion, overthrow results arrived at by life-long inquiries of the ablest student, while they have not given a day's serious or impartial study to them. They fancy that even the ignorant, if only they be what is called orthodox, are justified in strong denunciation of men quite as truthful as, and often incomparably more able than, themselves. Off-hand dogmatists of this stamp, who usually abound among professional religionists, think that they can refute any number of scholars, however profound and however pious, if only they shout "Infidel" with sufficient loudness.

It is these folk whom the Bishops fear. It is they who stand in the path of those who would like to confess what they know to be the facts. And it is to the task of enlightening these that learned and eloquent theologians should address themselves rather than to the task of finding excuses for affirming a belief in events that never occurred.

These "Times" articles have been referred to at some length because they, as might be expected from their source, are examples of modern apologetics in their most scholarly and their best literary form. What we read in them is the same

[1] In "The Bible and the Child," cited by P. Vivian, "The Churches and Modern Thought," Appendix, p. 404.

in substance as what we read in dozens of other apologetic treatises less ably written. To those of us who believe that the civilized world can be saved from disaster only by boldly facing reality and by eschewing that drug—rhetoric—they give a feeling of despondency if not of utter despair. For they appear to such an one not as attempts to explain, but as attempts to mystify; not as attempts to face the facts, but as attempts to shirk them; not as attempts to solve moral problems, but as attempts to shelve such problems in favour of a pious pose. Doubtless they are well meant, but good intentions do not excuse, though they have always been pleaded in excuse of, deliberate sophistry.

Appendix III

A MODERN THAUMATURGE

A Norwich parson is at present advocating "spiritual healing" as one of the attractions of his church, and is wicked enough to pretend, or foolish enough to believe, that he can cure cancers in a few minutes by the laying-on of hands. When we think of the dreadful consequences of spreading such a belief one finds it difficult to speak with restraint of such criminal fraud or superstition. If such a claim was made by any person who was not a clergyman of the Established Church, criminal proceedings would certainly be instituted. But fraud if committed in the name of established religion is apparently regarded as justifiable! The parson asserts that doctors are unable to remove tumours which he can cause to disappear in twenty minutes, and many prominent newspapers, instead of warning their readers against such "spiritual" quackery, publish letters from devout but ignorant persons who state that such "spiritual healing" must be possible because Christ performed cures by its means. The writers of these letters do not specify any particular Gospel miracle, but refer vaguely to these alleged "spiritual" cures. If they studied the stories to which they thus refer, they would find that they entail a belief in demoniacal possession, and that their theory involves the belief that this clergyman has the power, formerly regarded as a sign of the divinity of Jesus, of casting out devils, and that it also entails the belief that malignant tumours are really demons or caused by demons. Let them, before they delude unhappy people with false hopes, and before they encourage unfortunate sufferers from the most terrible of diseases to postpone undergoing the proper treatment, delay being fatal in this matter, ask this priest to give them the name and address of any single person whose disease has been diagnosed as cancer by any competent medical man and who is now cured of that disease by means of "spiritual

healing." One single authentic case would convince those who remain entirely unconvinced by mere assertions of the possibility of "spiritual healing." The responsibility of the higher clergy who do not openly condemn this "stunt," and of the newspaper proprietors who refrain from denouncing it, is very great. The rich and the well-educated will, when they are ill, doubtless continue to seek the advice of qualified doctors; but some poor and ignorant persons may be induced to consult this parson, just as in ancient times they consulted, and in backward parts of the world they still consult, magicians, medicine-men, "witch doctors," and other primitive priests. It is pretensions such as these which make it obligatory for those who can to speak out openly about matters which have been for so long concealed from the public.

INDEX

ABIRAM, 206
Adam, 36, 96, 109, 115, 123, 124
Adhémar, Bishop of Puy, 52
Admetus, 62, 99
Adonis, 55–6, 57, 58, 59, 99, 113
Aeneas, 99
Aesculapius, 59, 60, 113, 193, 201
Ahriman, 59
Alacoque, Marie, 238
Alban, St., 221
Albert, St., 186
Albertus Magnus, 229
Alcestis, 62, 67, 98
Alcmena, 113
Aldegundis, St., 223
Alexander, St., 80, 84
Amandus, St., 79
Ambrose, St., 75, 89
Ammon, St., 118
Ampoule, the Sainte, 222
Ananda, 91
Ananias, 31–2
Anaxagoras, 68
Anchises, 99
Anthony, St., 118, 217, 218
Antioch, Bishop of. See Theophilus
Aphrodite, 57
Aphrodisius, St., 86
Apollo, 62, 116, 194, 200
Apollodorus, 59, 60, 62, 113
Apollonius of Tyana, 66, 67, 68, 111, 202–4
Apuleius, 61, 99
Aquinas, St. Thomas, 130
Argives, 206
Aristeas, 62–3
Aristophanes, 50
Armenius, 60
Asclepius. See Aesculapius
Asir, the Amir of, 181
Athanasius, St., 217, 222
Attalus, St., 81, 178
Attis, 56, 58, 59, 149
Augustine, St., 73–4, 75, 129
Avalokiteswara, 100
Aventine, St., 86
Avitus, St., 79

BAAL, 56
Bacon, 207
Balder, 99
Barnabas, Epistle of, 105
Basil, 76
Bassus, daughter of, 73
Beatrice the Nun, 224–5
Bede, the Venerable, 80, 219–20
Benedict, St., 78, 215
Benignus, 80
Beno, St., 87
Benoit, St., 84
Bernard, St., 214
Bharata, 185
Bharadwaja, 185
Blaise, St., 216–7
Boethius, 87
Brigit of Kildare, St., 216
The Buddha and Buddhism, 91, 100, 115, 179, 182–3, 201
Byblus, 55

CÆSAR, 115, 189, 190, 207
Calvin, 129
Capaneus, 59
Caspalium, woman of, 73
Catherine of Siena, St., 215
Celsus, 68, 194
Celsus, St., 223
Cerberus, 98
Charinus, 96
Charlemagne, 65
Chartres, Bishop of, 79
Chrysolius, St., 86
Clovis, 222
Cleopas, 22–3, 27, 40
Coletta, St., 83
Columba, St., 84
Constantine, 127, 145, 150, 205, 210
Corentin, St., 185
Cortés, 91
Coué, M., 239–40
Crœsus, 115
Crucifixion, the, 6, 38, 189
Cupid, 99
Cuthbert, St., 219–20
Cybele, 56

Cyril, St., 82
Cyrus, 115

DAIRE, daughter of, 80
Damasen, 61
Dathan, 206
Decius, the Emperor, 71
Denis, St. See Dionysius
Desiderius, St., 86
Diocletian, 76
Dionysius the Areopagite, 86
Dionysos, 50, 55, 56, 58, 59, 98, 112, 180, 185
Dharma, 116
Dominic, St., 83, 215
Donatus, St., 178
Dorcas, 51
Drona, 91, 116
Drusiana, 75

EA, 59
Egidius, St., 236
Eleus and the Eleusinian Mysteries, 55, 59, 62, 69
Eleusinus, 74
Eleutherius, St., 78
Elijah, 50, 52, 75, 96, 110, 184–5, 186
Elisha, 50, 75, 87, 110, 184, 246
El Khondi. See St. George
Emmaus, 22, 24, 27, 46
Empedocles, 63, 114
Enoch, 96, 109–110
Eos, 59
Ephesus, 75. See also "Seven Sleepers"
Epidaurus and Epidauria, 59, 60, 201, 237
Er, 60
Etna, 114, 236
Euphorbius, 66
Eurydice, 98
Eusebius, 15, 20, 21, 65, 68, 180, 203, 228
Eutychus, St., 227
Ezra, 104, 110, 207

FRANCIS OF ASSISI, ST., 83, 118, 181, 183, 215, 218
—— of Hieronimus, St., 84
—— of Paula, St., 83, 179
—— of Xavier, St., 84
"Frogs, The," 50
Fursey, 220
—— St., 79

GABRIEL, the Archangel, 17, 114
Galilee, 4, 12–14, 16, 20, 22, 25, 26, 39–42, 46, 104, 106, 179, 182
Gamaliel, 9
Garmon, St., 80
Gayomart, 59
George, St., 76–7, 80, 227, 244, 255–7
Germanus, St., 80
Getæ, the, 63–4
Gildas, St., 78
Glaucus, 59
Glaucus (son of Minos), 60
Glycerius, 76
Godard, St., 82
Gore, Bishop, 37–8, 244
Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea, St., 76
—— of Nyssa, St., 201
—— the Thaumaturge, 200
—— of Tours, St., 117
Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, 229
Gulla, St., 84

HANUMAN, 91
Haroun Al Raschid, 187
Hegesippus, 150
Helen, 115
Hercules, 62, 67, 98, 113
Hermeland, St., 216
Hermes, 50, 62, 98
Herodotus, 54, 62, 63, 97, 116, 205–6, 209
Hibil Ziva, 99
Hierocles, 202
Hilaria, 56
Hilarion, St. (fourth century), 77, 218–9
—— St. (eighth century), 86
Hippolytus, 69, 60, 127, 146
"Holy House of Loreto." See Loreto
Horus, 55, 113
Hunneric, 228
Hyacinth (the god), 57
—— St., 183
Hypmenæus, 59

IACCHUS, 59
Indra, 116, 117
Irenæus, 65, 66, 105, 127, 150, 180, 191, 228
—— (a collector of taxes), 74
Isaiah, 110, 208–9
Ishtar, 97
Isis, 55

JAIRUS, daughter of, 51, 66, 67
James of Tarentaise, St., 78

Jericho, 207
Jerome, St., 38, 128, 218, 257
Jerusalem, 22, 24, 25, 39–42, 52, 97, 104, 106, 109, 114
Joanna, 11, 13
Jonah, 6, 209, 256
John the Baptist, 52, 99, 246
Joppa, 51, 256
Joseph of Arimathea, 9, 17, 39
Josephus, 106, 244, 256
Jovian, 76
Julian, St., 76, 183
Jupiter, 53, 194
Justin Martyr, 10, 128, 194

KENTIGERN, St., 187
Korah, 206
Koran, the, 186, 210, 211, 215
Krishna, 90, 99, 100, 117

LAODAMIA, 62
Lazarus, 50, 51, 72, 96, 160
Leuthius, 96–7
Leo, St., 86
Loreto, 225–6, 246
Lourdes, 237–240
Lucanus, St., 86
Lucian, St., 86
Luther, 129, 196
Lycurgus, 59

MACARIUS, St., 75
Mænads, the, 98
Madonna of Remiremont, the, 231–4
Mahomet. See Mohammed
Maidoc, St., 80, 216
Marcion, 127
Marduk, 59
Marianne de Jésus of Quito, 83
Marraci, Father, 72
Mars, 114
Martin of Pomposa, 79
—— of Tours, St., 76, 222
Mary Magdalene, 4, 7, 11–16, 19, 20, 23, 26, 27, 40, 41, 43, 50
—— the mother of James, 4, 11, 13
—— "the other," 7, 20
—— and Martha (sisters of Lazarus), 51
—— of Egypt, St., 185
Maurille, St., 84, 88, 89
Maza, 91
Melanius, St., 82
Memnon, 59
Menelaus, 115
Mercury, 55
Merlin, 211
Miao Shan, 100
Michael, the Archangel, 17, 79, 96, 99
Midrash, 61
Minos, 60
Mithra and Mithraism, 36, 58, 59, 98, 112–13, 149
Mochua, St., 80
Mohammed and Mohammedanism, 114, 115, 185, 196, 210, 225, 235
Moire, 61
Molcho, Solomon, 89
Montezuma, 91
Moses, 104, 110, 186
Murillo, 183

NAIN (widow's son), 51, 90
Nar, a, 90
Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, 181
Nazoræans, 99
Nazarius, St., 223
Neptune, 183
Nero, 64, 75, 111, 115, 223
Newman, Cardinal, 135, 244–9
Nicholas, St., 84
Nicodemus, 7; gospel according to, 17, 18, 39, 96, 97, 99, 100, 106, 107
Nicoletta, St., 83

ŒDIPUS, 113
Ontario, Bishop of, vi–viii, x–xiii
Origen, 36, 68, 121, 127, 194, 228
Orion, 183
Ormuzd, 89
Orpheus, 98
Osiris, 53–5, 58, 59, 93, 98, 113

PANOPOLIS, 15
Panes festival, 92
Pantaloon, St., 246
Papantzin, 91
Paphnutius, St., 78
Papias, 65
Parsees, 53
Patmos, 75
Patrick, St., 79–80; Purgatory of, 81
Patroclus, 75
Paul the hermit, 217
Pausanias, 60
Persephone, 57, 59, 62, 98, 99
Peter, Gospel according to St., 1, 8, 9, 15–17, 18, 106, 150
Peter's Church, St., 56
Philip, 109
Philip of Neri, St., 83
Philæ, 53
Philostratus, 66, 67, 68, 110, 203

Pilate, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 97
Pirithous, 98
Pistis Sophia, 65
Plato, 60, 64
Pliny, 106, 189
Plotinus, 36
Pluto, 57, 98
Pollux, 115
Polyidus, 60
Poppo, St., 82
Porphyry, 36
Poseidon, 183
Proba, St., 86
Proserpine, 57, 58, 99
Protesilaus, 62
Proteus, 66
Psyche, 99
Pythagoras, 63, 66

RAMA AND RAMAYANA, 90, 91, 185
René, 88, 89
Restituta, St., 88
Rhampsinitus, 97
Richard, St., 219
Romulus, 114–15
Rose, St., 215

SABÆANS, 99
Sacerdos, St., 81
Salome, 4, 13
Sanhedrin, 9, 11
Saoshyas, 53
"Saviour, texts of the," 65
Semele, 98, 112
Semiramis, 116
Seneca, 106, 113, 189
Serabis, 69, 204
Set or Seth, 54
"Seven Sleepers of Ephesus," 71–3, 210
Severin, St., 78
Severus, St., 79
Shiva, 90
Simon Magus, 111–12, 127, 205
Solangia, St., 86
Solomon, 186
Sorus, St., 216
Stephen, St., 44, 73–6
Stoertebecke, 87
Stonehenge, 211
Suetonius, 111, 204
Sukra, 90

TABITHA. See Dorcas
Tacitus, 204
Talmud, the, 186, 228
Tammuz, 57, 58, 97
Tertullian, 128, 228
Theodosius, the Emperor, 71, 97
Theophilus, 65, 66
Theseus, 98
Thor, 80
Thoth, 55
Tongan tradition, a, 60
Townshend, Colonel, 85
Trench, Archbishop, 195, 244–5
Trinitarian doctrine, 20–21, 97
Trinity (Egyptian), 53
Tylon, 61
Tyndareus, 59
Typhon. See Set

ULYSSES, 99

VALENTINUS AND VALENTINIANS, 105, 146
Valery, St., 79, 179
Venerable Bede, the. See Bede
Venus, 99
Vespasian, 204
Vincent Ferrier, St., 83, 85
Virgin Mary, the, 117, 224–7, 231, 237–8

WALBURGA, ST., 246–7
Wesley, 196
Westminster Abbey, 115, 187
William of Tyre, 52
—— of Villiers, 80
Winifred's Well, St., 87
Woolston, Thomas, 176
Wulfrum, 81

XENOPHON, 207

YAMATO-DAKE, 70
Yudisthira, 116–17

ZAGREUS, 55
Zalmotis, 63–4
Zenobia, St., 78
Zeus, 57, 59, 66, 98, 115, 116
Zoroaster and Zoroastrians, 59, 9 183
Zosimas, 217–8